

XII



a dead spot of light...

Introduction

Part I:

While the weeks and also months passed by, I had been in touch with a label called ATMF (Aeternitas Tenebrarum Music Foundation). They provide you with a good amount of download links, which you can use for your magazine and they also negotiate interviews with the bands. So far so good ...

One of their bands is the Norwegian Disiplin and the cover artwork made me wonder a bit. Being active in the metal scene for some time already and have had some contact with the 'retard part' of it, the skull (W #1, 2) suggested that there is something wrong with them. Some weeks ago my suspicions gained some concrete evidence through some sort of a commentary on the label's homepage. It left me in a bit of awkward situation because two interviews as well as two reviews were already being done with two bands on an associated or sublabel or whatever. Nevertheless, both of these were scrapped and thrown into the dust bin and the magazine lost a considerable amount of pages.

Furthermore, another band, which had contacted me several months ago, changed their label as well. The new one also shows some sort of reluctance to distance themselves from the NS scene and again I had to remove a part from the magazine. Would I have added all of this stuff, a length of more than sixty pages would have been possible without much difficulty.

Let me insert a quote first:

Behind every fascism, there is a failed revolution.

(Note: this is not to be understood as apologetic or so. It is something generally paraphrased by Slavoj Žižek and which points to a crucial and important aspect! The original statement is by Walter Benjamin)

This is the dirt you have to dig through these days. Maybe I am getting too old, but when I started to listen to black metal, the atmosphere in the scene was different. Today, the reluctance of labels to distance themselves from this 'shit' – oh, the irony – seems confusing; especially in times of the Internet and unlimited access to other cultures from all around the globe. Freedom is (or leads to) ghettoization? I wonder what Orwell would think of our days? Being aware with a good amount of his writings and having had discussions on this subject in some forums, it would be safe to say that he would be appalled by how the world has changed in the second half of the preceding century. Not to mention the current mess.

Yet this is not everything. I also received a flyer from a small and young diy/Xerox-magazine from the USA, ordered it and guess what had been in it? Yes, the same shit again... Well, generally I try to check those for the bands and content, but this time there was nothing but the name of it ... and nothing else. From the mere design and style such was not actually obvious, because the direction pointed rather somewhere else.

What are the lessons to be learned from these incidents? To be even more careful, to spend even more time on investigating the bands and to shift the focus of the magazine a bit. Yes, there will be less metal in the forthcoming editions and something outside of this realm will receive a focus. Several interview requests are already out, some responses have there been already and I doubt that all will make it.

W #1: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/3rd_SS_Division_Totenkopf

W #2: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_symbolism

Part II:

Aside from what I had discussed above, a further aspect has bothered me in the last few months: e-mails. I do not insist on an answer within 24h, but one in a week should lie in the realm of possibilities, or? As such, some stuff did not make it into this edition, because I still had some open questions. Do I have to figure everything out by myself, hm?

Some new ideas were added to this magazine

- **Poetry ramblings (by me)**
Why write a text, when you can also use a poem, hm?
- **Advertisements and such**
- **The something else section**
Reviews on music that is difficult to write on or that I like for a particular reason and have not made up my mind on yet or that I do not have the knowledge to write a 'real' review on and are therefore nothing more than some impressions.

A short note on the poem-like review on the release by Sarah Weis:

I thought this to be a full release, which was made available at the Free Music Archive, but I was mistaken. Actually, those compositions are only a fraction of the whole piece, which can be obtained through Amazon. Nevertheless, I wanted to show what goes through my mind while listening to YOUR music ... thanks for tormenting me with so many weird stuff, folks.

A short note on the review with the Croatian band 'The Frost':

It was originally intended for the Circle of Destruction magazine, but as it is put on hold for an indefinite time – if my memory does not deceive me – I asked the editor, whether I am allowed to use it for my own one... it is a bit dated ...

And what I had forgotten in the earlier editions of my magazine:

I would like to thank every band and label for the promotion material, answer and so on. And thank you for the moral support and nice e-mails ... appreciated!

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Contact:
Oneyoudontknow at yahoo dot de

All the best ...
oneyoudontknow

One final note:

The people in Japan as well as in the Middle East are in dire need for help. Anyone, who has followed closely the events that are unfolding in both regions of the world, might consider giving the people over there some support. Especially the ongoing farce regarding the nuclear facilities in Japan should us all be a warning and question even more serious the apologetic behaviour of the nuclear industry. Let us all hope they are able to contain as much radiation as possible, because the consequences would otherwise be devastating. The bands from Japan, which appear in this edition, had been dealt with before the even happened. I just wanted to make this aspect clear.

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Tumulte

Hey, how is the winter in Quebec? Here in the northern parts of Germany people complain about a bit too much snow, because it prevents them from travelling as fast and comfortable as they are used to.

Have to tell you that winter is very soft here since couple years, we just have 2, 3 very cold days end of January but winter is not over.

Your band contains of two band members, right? Is the music created in rehearsal sessions or does each of the members come up with his/her own ideas?

Both members come with different ideas & then we share ideas together we don't practice too much because we were really busy but we don't do shows also so we do couple rehearsals & then recorded

Do you record a lot of material for future purposes or do you scrap a lot of ideas right from the start?

Not too much, when we have an idea we do improvisation a lot & then when we got the good feeling we keep it.

Why did you choose to play this extreme kind of music? Was there a release that made you appreciate this kind of art? Were you introduced by someone, did you discover it all by yourself/ves?

Well I love extreme music since a long time but also experimental stuffs, I'm a major fan of Naked City & all John Zorn, La Monte Young, Luigi Russolo, Ploquin & Sauvageau & also Musique concrète "concrete music"

Zwellba like grindcore stuffs ambient noise also Jazz any musics have good players if you know what I mean

Tumulte is French of Tumult; a word that exists in German and in English alike. Wikipedia (1) offers three definitions of the term:

- ❖ violent and noisy commotion or disturbance of a crowd.
- ❖ a general outbreak or disorder, riot.
- ❖ mental or emotional disturbance.

Which if any of these do you perceive as reflecting your music best? In which facets can people discover the 'tumult' in your art?

Mental + emotional disturbance sound right but the 2 others definitions are very good also.

What would you describe as being the sound of Tumulte? Is there a certain characteristic in the music?

down-tempo drone ambient + experimental feeling & also both of us are fans of movie soundtracks

What kind of instruments have and do you use for your recordings?

We use almost regular instruments like guitar, bass & drums + a little bit of keyboard the rest is pure noise in improv in general

While I remember that your first recording was pretty noisy and intense, the style of your music has shifted in this respect. How important is distortion for your performance and have you found the overall level already or is there a chance to see/hear it in-/decreasing again?

The 3 first releases were really noisy due to the feeling of the moment & also we just play without searching exactly for a specific direction, but on next release might be more musical & less noisy because we don't want to repeat ourselves & ourselves again

You have released three albums so far:

- ❖ **Total Néant** = total nothingness
- ❖ **Désordre Social** = Social Disorder
- ❖ **La Carpette Anglaise** = The English Carpet (that an expression use in France about French who act as a carpet or loser)

& Also you can add that we have a 4way split + 1 compilation song on Dark Meadow Records

Would you mind translating the titles into English and could you write a few lines on each of them?

Té Laite from Desordre Social comes with some vocal parts or are these samples? As this rather an exception, it would be interesting to know what their content would be. Why does the voice play rather a minor role in your art?

its real voice & the topic is about an angry man who scream about is A wasted(spoiled) life that song is influence by a movie of Gaspard Noé (Seul contre tous or I Stand Alone) I really recommand to watch that movie its one of my all time favorite movie & for the reason why vocal is a minor its because we prefer to use music & feeling but maybe in the futur it will be different

Each of the three compositions on Desordre Social comes with a distinct set of elements and sounds, which are varied over the course of the length of the track. Why don't you break apart from one idea and progress to other ones as well? Why is it important to focus on this one approach?

Desordre Social is probably the most noisy release we did, that album is also very minimalist due there no drums its only guitars (& not too much by the way) its almost atmospheres I think we try something really access on the feeling & use a lot of improvisation & a lot of 1 take 1 shot but were not access to put a release each both of us play in other bands & have family, etc so busy all the time

A bit of a surprise is your contribution to the 4-way split with Endemit, Playing with Nuns and Q.S.N.A. Your music comes more varied there and uses facets of silence to create a certain tension and atmosphere. How does this fit into your concept and are aspects on this compositions likely to be found in the future as well?

Well the song on that compilation was something new but I think you will hear more in that style for future songs

Aside from this, will Tumulte's albums continue to have this variety of different concepts? For example, tracks loaded with guitar reverb or the strange percussion elements in the last composition Le Meutre. Can you lay out where you want to progress with this band? Do you have found your style already?

Were openmind in general we listen to a lot of different music can be Jazz, classic, Rock, any experimental music in general we dont focus on a style in general but more the way we feel when we create or stuffs ... I think too much pass time to focus on one style & do the same album every year or 2, 3 years

Torben Sangild once wrote an article on The Aesthetics of Noise (<http://www.ubu.com/papers/noise.html>). I would like to take some quotations from it and like to write your opinion on it:

- *(*) Noise can blow your head out. Noise is rage. Noise is ecstatic. Noise is psychedelic. Noise is often on the edge between annoyance and bliss. Noises are many things. Noise is a difficult concept to deal with.*
- Definitely noise it's hard to deal but it also part of our life in general ... Like you walk on the street you got news especially in a major city & in the music in general you can play with a various of diffents noise & great music like Psych Rock explore it a lot in the 60's or 70's ... today its very underground... but use to be part of the rock culture
- *(*) In various ways, noise as a sensual, aesthetic phenomenon points out of the field of the subject as a divided entity, towards what could be called the transsubjective, that which transgresses the individual. This applies to the explosive ecstasy as well as the implosive intimacy. This transsubjective point is also bridging the gap between rock music, normally considered subjective, and electronica, normally considered objective. With noise, rock turns away from its standard focus of a subject expressing his/her feelings, towards a more anonymous state.*
- For sure noise is really sensual & its almost the truth essence of music ... that where the sound start after that its chemistry & Math

- (*) *To excite our sensibility, music has developed into a search for a more complex polyphony and a greater variety of instrumental tones and coloring. It has tried to obtain the most complex succession of dissonant chords, thus preparing the ground for Musical Noise.*
- I would say that it's an excellent way to see things for the music in general, generally the minimal start + the creative instinct & of course to have a musical perception & openmind + especially it is important to listen a lot of music, be open to all the world
- (*) *We must break at all cost from this restrictive circle of pure sounds and conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds.*
- Cant really comment that thats the comment itself ... Like its the way you want to feed your creation or art... name it the way you want its not really important.

How do you see 'normal' music combined with noise; attempts of these alliances can be found in the black metal as well as in the doom and drone genres. Will this help the music not only to become more extreme and to progress conceptually?

From my side it will help a lot, music is too much main street since the 90's all the artists in general want to make cash money & dont care about the rest. But in the underground area we need to care more about the music or feeling like create an atmosphere, like no rules, no restrictions just DIY & whore or bitch musics for posers

In case someone wants to start exploring this extreme form of music, what albums would you recommend to this person?

I recommended Luigi Russolo, La Monte Young, John Zorn, Lustmord, khanate, a lot of Drone Doom bands

How can people get in touch with you and where can people buy your outputs?

<http://www.myspace.com/tumultedoom>
<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com>
<http://www.myspace.com/ziektenl>
<http://www.lastfm.fr/music/Tumulte>
<http://www.gemm.com/artist/TUMULT>

Some final words if you like.

Thanks for the interview & Vielen Danke Deustchland fanatiker des musik Noise
 Freakout fans
 take care & cheers



Brand

Hello there. Nice to see a band restart after such a long period. Let me guess, you missed the groupies, didn't you?

We never stopped.

Between I and II, your two releases so far, a span of ten years exists. Could you lay out the history of the band? How was everything started, how did the first demo happen, why did the band break up and why this restart?

We started out in this constellation at around 96/97 after playing in various death/black/gore metal projects before that. The songs on I were written during this period and we finally got down to recording them in the winter of 99/00. It was recorded on a standard eight track tape recorder, thus the crappy, but quite cool, sound. We never broke up and we never restarted. Brand has been up and running since then.

What kept you busy in the time between these two releases? Did you join the ranks of other bands or did you put everything to rest or altogether?

As we said, we continued playing, and writing throughout these years but didn't really feel the urge to make it available for others. In around 2008 we felt that we should give it another go in the studio, and the result was II, which of course still only is the beginning...

From your perspective, what has changed in the ten years since your first output? How has the metal scene developed?

We haven't really followed the development of the metal scene that closely, but one thing we have seen is that the extreme metal scene in Scandinavia is much smaller today than it was ten years ago, while it has continued to grow in continental Europe and in the US.

Have there been line-up changes in the years since the foundation of Brand?

No, never. BRAND is us three: Evilvalive, Kristofer and H. Walter. If we ever would change this, it would become a totally different project under a different name.

Why this name anyway? It does not really sound that 'tough'; compared with Darkthrone, Emperor, Immortal, Lord Belial etc. Does it have a special background or so?

BRAND means "fire" in Swedish. Tough enough for us.

Interestingly, some of you use pseudonyms, while others refuse to do so. Any particular reason for this?

They're all pseudonyms.

What about corpse-paint? Did you spent some time in front of the mirror and attempted to grim and evil? How do you see that more and more bands tend to avoid the clichés of the black metal genre?

Corpse-paint is cool. It's not for us, but its cool. For the right band, it's not a cliché. Every band should do what they think is right for them and don't worry about whether what they like could be perceived as a cliché or not.

So, how did 'I', your first release, take place? In the booklet it says "November 1999 – Mars 2000". Is this the time used for recording the demo or does it also include the whole song-writing process?

It was the time we spend on making final decisions, arrangements and recording. The basic structure of the songs came to be in the years ahead of that. We recorded it ourselves under very primitive conditions. We learned alot by doing that but are glad to say that the technology of recording music yourselfe has come a long way since then.

Looking back from today, how do you perceive this release? Are you able to enjoy it; maybe not in the whole but at least in parts?

We definitely enjoy it. The sound is crap, but we still like the songs for what they are. It still means a lot to us.

The booklet suggests that each of the members played a considerable amount of instruments. Can you write a bit about this? This seems to have changed, or?

The basic responsibilities are still the same, although we played around a little bit with who played what in those days.

Do you consider re-recording the old stuff again or do you feel that this early chapter is something you want to let slip into the past aka oblivion?

We have too much new material that needs to be put to death to make that a priority right now, but maybe at some point in the future. The original production and sound quality clearly doesn't match the quality of the songs.

What makes up the music of Brand today? How would you describe the music in a few words?

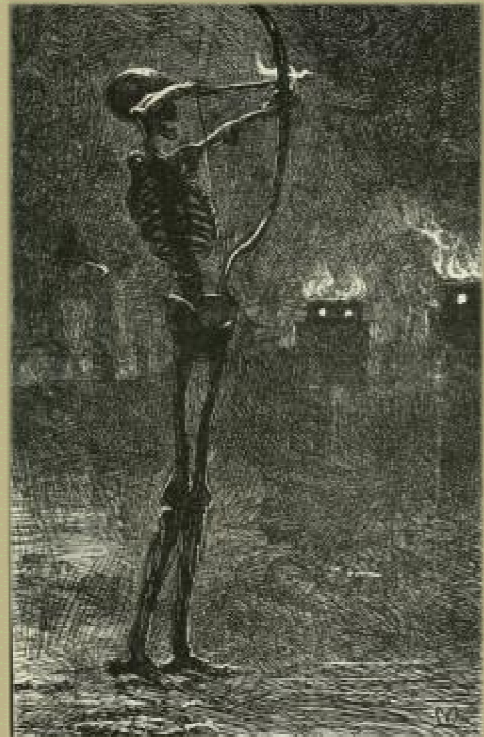
It is what we are, our version of extreme metal. Our influences are probably mainly black/death/thrash-metal bands, but BRAND is mainly a format for us to express ourselves. Melodies and harmonies are always the main focus, it's just that when melodies describe death and anguish, it takes an aggressive format for them to come alive.

How long did it take you to get the latest recording done? Did you record it all by yourself, did you use a professional studio and are you satisfied with the final result?

It took us two days in the studio, with some additional time outside the studio. We're very satisfied with it, it represents us well. We had really good producers helping us out who got what we are about. Yes, it was a professional one...

Your music combines (old-school melodic) death metal with black/thrash metal. What makes this type of music special to you and how do you see the long history of Swedish bands in this tradition? Do you try to follow it in some respect?

Our music is just a product of who we are. Of course, some of the really great bands of all time are from Scandinavia, and some of them have made a great impact on our lives. All three of us grew up listening to and playing this kind of music together.



An aspect that cannot be overlooked (or overheard), while listening to your II release, is the amount of facets with which you present you art. 'Cosmic Violence' and 'Interstellar Journeys into Thrash' have some thrashy parts, 'Space Warp Madness' comes with an extended solo part and the opener has even some really calm moments. Aside from this, the music is no high-speed festival, but comes mixed with slower melodic interludes. Is this what you have in mind for Brand; this contrast between the two extremes together with a more skillfully executed guitar part?

Contrasts add to the dynamics of the songs if used in the right way, we think that we succeeded in that. It's not an end in itself but rather a mean to an end and a way to accentuate certain parts.

Space Warp Madness is fucking sick. The solo part is extremely cool and my only complaint would be that the track needs more than half its length to unleash this stunning performance. Who had the idea with the solo part, who composed it and is there a chance to hear more of this on future release?

Glad you like it. Kristofer composed it. No, we will not repeat ourselves when we create music.

The cover artwork is a bit strange, because it combines various elements: a burning tree in front of a huge Saturn, with a rather dark set of stars in the background. Could you elaborate on this topic a bit? Who was responsible for it? The booklet provides no information on this subject.

It combines the meaning of BRAND with the cosmic theme of the release. Infected Art from Poland created the artwork together with us.

While the first demo had lyrics entirely in Swedish – and these printed –, the second outputs has a larger focus on English and no texts in the booklet at all. What were the reasons for this shift in the language and why is the booklet so ‘empty’ this time?

It is a listening experience, preferably in a dark setting where you couldn't be able to read the lyrics anyway. Actually, we think the words are quite distinguishable as they are. We played around with lyrics in English ahead of I also, but ended up with a result entirely in Swedish. We don't really see any reason why we shouldn't mix Swedish and English. Maybe there will be additional languages mixed in there on future tracks...

Furthermore, has there been a shift in the level of involvement of the band members? Again, the booklet of the first demo gives some pretty detailed information on who composed what, while the latest one leaves a lot in the dark. So, how does one have to imagine that the song-writing process in Brand takes place?

We all compose, arrange and write, on different levels on different tracks, but all of us are always involved on some level. The music is what it is because of all of us and couldn't be without all of us.

Call me nit-picky, but is the way you entitled the releases not a bit too simple? I and now II ... and the next one will be III? Why so little creativity when it comes to this?

The recording itself does not have an identity. The music does, and the music is named. If we arrive at a suitable name for our next recording, that's fine, but if not; III it is.. Also, it's a good way for us to remember in which order we made them.

Where do you see the band head towards anyway? Is it possible to lay out the evolution of the band in some respect; the path you want to progress on? Do you have new music written already?

We have a lot of new material ready and are right now in the process of rehearsing and preparing to record a full length album during 2011. It will be a continuation of the path we're already on, but the scope and variety on the new album will be even wider. The only criteria is that every song needs to mean something to us, otherwise it's cut. Every note on the recording will be there for a reason. Hopefully the album will be released this fall.

Will you try to get in touch with a label or do you try to spread the music all by yourselves?

We will make it available by ourselves. We don't see a reason for involving others. Infrastructure is so easy to access these days.

Did you have a chance to play in front of an audience so far or do you plan to do so?

That is not what BRAND is about. Maybe in some setting it could be, but it's not our focus.

Would you mind sharing some words on your local scene? Is there some thriving trend, some bands to turn to and recommend, some cool artists you are in touch with?

We don't really have much contact with other metal bands from around here. As we said before, the extreme metal scene has shifted toward other parts of the world.

In case of musical preferences, how have these changed over the years? Are you still able to enjoy albums you listened to ten years ago?

Our preferences regarding metal bands are probably unchanged. Of course we enjoy new bands when they bring something new and interesting to the table. We also listen to many different types of music.

Sweden has been in the spotlight due to the ‘issues’ in which Julian Assange has been involved in. As someone from this country, what would your opinion on this matter be? How was the matter portrait in your media and do you think that the image of Sweden suffered a bit through the way it is all handled?

No comment.

How do you see the Internet anyway? A lot of bands and labels complain about the inflation of sites to download music, which ruins their ability to make some bucks of their art. On the other hand you have the chance to reach out to new audiences and get in touch with people from countries you might have never dreamed of (or bring down governments like it happens in the Maghreb very recently).

Obviously the Internet serves us well. We're not in it for the bucks.

Could you name some albums that had an impact on you; back and then?

Blessed Are The Sick, Bergtatt, Transylvanian Hunger, Det Som Engang Var, Nemesis Divina, Left Hand Path, Reign In Blood, Kill Em All, Peace Sells, Blizzard of Ozz, Like An Everflowing Stream, In The Forest Of The Dreaming Dead, Storm of The Lights Bane, Painkiller, De Mysteriis Dom Sathanas.

How can people contact you and where/how can someone buy your music?

brandsthlm@hotmail.com, myspace.com/brandofficial. The music is available on standard sites such as Spotify, iTunes etc. You can also obtain hard copies if you contact us directly.

Any final words if you like.

Be sure to look out for the release of our new full length album the next half of 2011.

Have an ice day...

Brand

(Sweden; Black Metal)

<http://www.myspace.com/brandofficial>

Following the interview with the Swedish band Brand a section on reviews on both of their releases is presented. What makes these both outputs so interesting is the time span that lies in between their release date; around ten years. The interview sheds some light on this issue, so it is unnecessary to repeat it here again.

Brand – I (2000)

7 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ - _ - (42:39)

The first impression that you gain while listening to this first demo is the dated sound. Actually, in style even the year 2000 seems to be misleading as well, because the overall atmosphere and way in which the music is presented points towards an even earlier period of the 'extreme' metal genre. Rather fast played black metal with some shrieking like vocals on top of it can be found in 'I' and the quality is actually not bad. The complaint of the band about the drum-computer is not that justified, because every reviewer these days has to endure so much worse than what is offered here; you do not want examples, believe me.

Early Mörk Gryning, Dissection and early Lord Belial come to mind while listening to Brand's first output, while some additional melodic death metal (also the old-school branch) should be added to this hellish brew. Calm moments – acoustic ones – make an appearance as well, but their overall impact can be neglected. Together a surprisingly solid and interesting performance can be found here. Especially the guitars are actually quite good, because they do not stick to some sort of monotonous tremolo-picking all the time, but used more complex riff structures to broaden the scope; even solo parts or solo fragments can be identified.

Even though the performance is quite good for a first demo and you can clearly hear music whose style moves beyond the all too generic rehearsal room recording sessions, the whole concept has some flaws. The drum-computer would be one, but something more serious can be found in the song-writing itself. At times the ideas sound a bit too stretched and dull. With nearly six minutes in average length per track it is a challenging task to keep the attention of the listener over such a period; something Brand find difficult to do.

Nostalgic might want to try to get 'I', because they might enjoy this kind of black metal that has become to rare these days. A rather raw production, at times harsh shrieking vocals, some rare choir parts and a quite good performance in terms of the instruments complete an overall positive impression.

Brand – II (2010)

4 Tracks (CD – Self-released) - _ _ - (21:41)

I found this band rather by surprise and did not actually contact them over their music. The Metal Archives is a neat database but some users seem to be reluctant when it comes to add releases and complete their submissions or the profiles. Not too long ago one of the admins provided a PHP-list through which it is possible to identify those entries that are incomplete. Brand had been one of those and this had been the incentive for me to get in touch with them. They were so kind and provided me with copies of both their releases and not only is their profile completed for now, I am also able to write on their music and interview them. Yes, this is the story behind it all.

The difference with their first demo is huge. A better sound – not really a surprise –, varied song-writing – glimpses could already be found on 'I' – and some solo guitar parts are what might come as somewhat unexpected. The tracks are more streamlined, now, more focussed and better composed than on their 'I' output. Furthermore, even though the band used the label 'black/death' metal to describe their art, the actual performance reaches over to other genres as well. The riffs show an unmistakable influences from the thrash scene – Interstellar Journeys into Thrash; nomen est omen I would say – and these fit very well into the overall style the band. Those four tracks, each of them rather fast and with a heavy focus on the riff-structure – the drums as well as the bass play rather a supportive role here –, make pretty clear what kind of music the Swedish actually want to play. While in concept being rather conservative, a surprisingly progressive influence can be discovered in the song-writing as well as in the production. No depressive, ambient and keyboard elements make an appearance here, this is tight and powerful metal with some slightly dark twists.

Being rather melodic in style and in some respect also aggressive, solo-guitar elements do not play a major role in the concept of the band ... except for the last track; Space Warp Madness. In case this one track foreshadows the things to come, then this band might receive broader attention in the black metal scene with no difficulty. Maybe it is the general lack of such guitar madness in this realm of these extreme arts that prevents a more cooled down and neutral perspective. Whatever it might be this one track has stuck with me for some time now and even though it is by no means 'perfect', it is still of a quality that gives you an incentive to take another spin ... and another and

After all those praises I also would like to add some amount of criticism. When there is one aspect that tends to annoy me constantly and this aspect has not changed over the course of several weeks, then it is the opener of 'II'. The vocals are of a kind that tends to turn me off again and again. From my point of view, they simple do not fit with the music. This aggressive growling style sounds displaced, like a relict from another era and ruins it for me in some respect. Aside from this only minor aspects need to be pointed towards: like the build-up of Space Warp Madness is an ounce to long for instance.

Nevertheless, this demo is a lot of fun to listen to and the band has taken a huge step into the right direction. Music that in concept tries to break with the black metal and approaches it from a broader direction can be found on this album. Elements from the thrash as well as the death metal scene along with some really nice solos have been used by these Swedish artists for their latest output. Their next album is definitely something to look out for. In the meantime their 'II' one should keep you entertained considerably.

To sum the impressions up:

Those two releases do not give the impression of having been created by the same band. With a time span of ten years between their release dates, it is only natural to discover some sort of evolution in the sound and professionalism, even though nothing was spread in the years between them. Both of them have their own fascination, but their latest output might be the one that will receive larger praises. Song-writing, technical twists and also the production are the arguments to back this up. The Swedish band has set quite a level with their 'II' output and it is a challenging task to come up with something of a similar quality. Any that would be left to say? Well, nothing but giving a recommendation on both of their releases.

The Frost

Greetings Gorgor, please introduce your band. Where are you from? Tell us about your motivation to start it. When was it formed and how came all into existence?

The Frost was formed in winter 2004/2005 in my hometown Bjelovar in Croatia as a one man Black metal band. I'm active on the Croatian underground scene even since '94, though since that year until the forming of The Frost I mainly played with wrong people and in wrong bands that didn't have enough potential nor wish to make something with their work that would show results. Exactly for that reason I got the idea and motivation to start something I've been wanting for long time, just waiting for the right moment to do it, which was to have my own black metal band.

So The Frost was born as one man band and since the beginning till today it has shown with its work that it's one of the most serious and definitely the most active bands of the Croatian metal scene... Though time will show that what I've done so far is only the beginning and how persistent and determined I am in my intent to make The Frost a recognizable black metal band in the future. As I said, time will show...

Please enlighten us on your influences; music, literature or art in general.

I draw my inspiration from my emotions, visions and reflections on things that surround us. Honestly, I don't have any direct, conscious influence I'd like to extract as a direct inspiration. On the other hand, I surely unconsciously draw a lot of influence both from music and literature, just like from art such as painting etc. I try to have my own unique source of inspiration that would make the music as original as possible and that would keep The Frost away as much as possible from constant repeating, copying and non-original mediocrity that black metal scene is flooded with.

How have been the responses (fans, labels, magazines) been over the years?

Very good! Really, ever since the beginning the reactions to my work were very good, coming whether from the fans, labels or fanzines I would send my material to. Since the beginning until now I got much more positive than negative critiques, I gave around ten interviews worldwide, and I can't complain that I had a problem with a search for a record label.

All in all I'm pleased with the reactions so far, though in future I intend to do my best to make the reactions even better.

Do you write all the music by yourself or are there other musicians with whom you compose the songs?

Yes, I'm responsible for all music and lyrics in The Frost.

During the recordings I used session musicians, though they don't have anything to do with the composing of the songs.

A lot of side-projects can be found today, but you seem to have none or? Why?

Yes, nowadays you can see many side-projects and it's OK as long as one can afford it, be it financially or having enough time. As for me, I think it's better to have one band that is the real thing, rather than for instance play in four bands, while in none of them you can give 100 % of yourself.

No-one can sit on four chairs at the same time...

It's the reason why I have only The Frost and I don't think about any side-projects because that would keep me distant from working in The Frost.

You have released two splits so far: one with Black Fire from Columbia and another one with Massemord (Norway) and Valdur (United States). How have you been able to participate in these? Did you know any of the participating bands before?

Yes, two splits were released during 2008, the one with Black Fire from Columbia was released through Kerzakraum Records, that material was released after the guys from Black Fire asked me if I'm interested in making a split with them. Of course I accepted and contacted my long-time friend Helnakstav of the Kerzakraum Records to ask him if he's interested in releasing that split and he liked the idea. That's the story regarding that release.

The second 3 way split CD with Massemord and Valdur was released by BlackMetal.com Records.

I never had any contact with neither of these bands before this release, and the communication with BlackMetal.com was established while I was searching for a label that would be interested in releasing

my first full-length album I'm currently working on. I simply sent The Frost "Sounds of the Frozen Hate" EP to Elden of BlackMetal.com and he loved the material so much that he offered me this 3 way split and the full-length as well.

The full-length should be released until spring 2009.

Your band has changed quite a lot over the years. From a very old-school, linear and 'primitive' written songs on your early releases towards more complex, very catchy and complex ones. How came this change in direction and what has been your influence over the years? How would your next step look like in the progression of 'the Frost'?

Hmm, yes, you're right, The Frost has changed from the earlier releases till today noticeably, I hope to the better. In the beginning I started from the scratch; what I did, I did according to my own possibilities and my way of thinking wasn't the way it is now. I wasn't, for instance, thinking about the music and originality but wanted to make and record songs and try to make something of it. You know, in the beginning you have to break the ice with something. As time was passing by I was doing a lot of thinking about what I actually want The Frost to be and what kind of music I want to make. I came to the conclusion that I don't want to be one more band in the sea of the same or very similar bands that are repeating themselves from one release to another and literally copy bands that are someone else's copy themselves. I want to make music that has its own identity and isn't anyone's copy.

That is very difficult nowadays, though I'll do my best to reach my goal.

In the future, from The Frost you can expect the unexpected.

What do your lyrics deal with?

Lyrics themes follow the atmosphere and the titles of the songs.

The texts are closely bounded with nature and they mainly speak about isolation, my version of misanthropy and depression in a very dark and cold way. I mainly write the way I feel in that moment and I think that this is the only right and honest way.

Black metal is often associated with 'Satanism' respectively 'anti-Christian' themes. How does this aspect influence your music and the concept behind "The Frost"?

The Frost isn't a satanic Black metal band, in my lyrics there are anti-christian elements, though that's not the first thing I want to put an accent on with my music. We live in times in which all these stories regarding Christianity, anti-Christianity, Satanism and occultism have been told and chewed up so many times that, in my opinion, it's senseless to repeat and push the same story for the bazillionth time. Satanism and occultism are an interesting read the way I see them and I can't say that I didn't study them at some point, but that didn't leave such impact on me that it would inspire me in my creative work. On the other hand, I'm disgusted when I see how the Black metal scene is overloaded and poisoned with fake satanic and anti-Christian bands that shamelessly adorn themselves with satanic symbols and anti-christian themes, and behind all that there are only spoiled mama's boys that don't have a clue about what they are propagating.

The Frost doesn't need satanic symbols to be dark enough nor anti-christian themes to be provocative enough, I have a clear vision of what I want and that is "Be what you are and do as you feel".

Is it important to you to have a clean sound or do you prefer to sound rather raw and 'dirty'?

That depends on the kind of material, but I have to admit that I prefer the raw and dirty sound as I'm a real underground freak.

Have you played live with The Frost or are you planning to do so?

So far The Frost has never played live, but that will change very soon.

I finally found serious session members that in the first place are my good friends. They are guys that truly showed interest in serious work in The Frost, so that The Frost from next year on will definitely be an active band when it comes to playing live shows. We'll try to play as many concerts as possible, festivals as well, as it's still the best way to promote the band.

As an artist, how do you see the tendency to download music?

I don't support that in any way!

What do you prefer? Exchanges via e-mail or sending letters to people abroad? Please explain.

Communication via e-mail is of course faster and more simple, but letters and packages have their charm that the internet communication can't measure up with.

Nowadays it's impossible to imagine the communication without Internet though I remember the 90-ies when I would receive up to 5 letters a day from everywhere and that was a great pleasure.

Every process of opening the envelope and reading the letter, checking of the flyers and listening to the tapes that would arrive in these packages were like a ritual to me, and that is something an e-mail can't give you. These days I mainly use e-mail but still I receive and send lots of packages and letters regarding The Frost. All in all, if I could choose between e-mails and letters, I'd choose letters, just like in the good old times.

As the scene is changing due to the rise of the internet, how do you see the metal scene or the black metal one in particular?

The Internet has changed not only the music but also the whole way of communicating and promotion, some new sub-genres of metal emerged... on the other hand, some things always stay the same; bands that are hard at work and stand for it 100% deserve and gain support. That also goes for labels, promoters, people who do shows, etc.

How do you see the NS and pagan bands?

As I said, I will support any band which truly stands behind their work and what they believe in, but for me there's no room for politics in Black Metal or music in general.

These two facets of the metal scene rely on a strong emphasis of symbolism and also black metal bands do tend to have their 'inverted' cross or pentagram on their cover artwork/logo in order to apply to the scene's code. Such cannot be found on your releases, why? What do symbols mean to you? Are they used too excessively today?

I already answered that clearly in one of the previous questions.

What is black metal? How would you describe this term? Has its meaning and implication changed over time?

Everyone has their own view; for me Black metal means freedom, freedom to express myself and what I stand for in the best possible way. It is the negative energy which liberates me from this rot and misery that surrounds me.

On photos you use 'corpse paint' and what does this mean to you? Is it an essential part of the black metal scene? How do you see bands that do not use it; like Akercocke for instance?

The Frost uses corpse paint to get the specific feel we want to produce, that's all. Every band has to know in what way they want to present their work, with corpse paint or whatever, doesn't matter. There are a lot more important things a serious band has to pay attention to than stage appearance. Unfortunately, many bands today put image before music.

Towards the end of the interview: Final words, please.

Thank you for this great interview and for supporting The Frost.

I really appreciate that.

Ones again, I'm really sorry about my extremely delay about my answers.

I wish you much success with your 'zine, and for the ones who are interested in finding out something more about The Frost, they can contact me at: gorgor_the_frost@hotmail.com

Keep the Black Flame alive!!!



Bergmál

How are things in Sweden? From which region are you from?

- ✿ Eric: Things in Sweden are very pleasant at the moment, spring is closing in and the cold winter is starting to let loose its grip. We basically live in the middle of Sweden in a little town called Motala, a couple of hours drive from Stockholm.

Can you enlighten the readers a bit about your history? When did everything start and why did you pick this particular type of music? Was there a particular album that had a profound impact on you?

- ✿ Eric: Me and Lucas have played together since we were like 11-12 years old (we are 18 now), back then we played stuff like nirvana, blink-182 and the hives...music you usually start of with when you're that young.
Later on Melker joined in and we got ourselves a new drummer (not Filip). At this time we were slowly moving towards a more experemintal sound. We were (and still are) influenced by Circa Survive, a great progressive american band which somehow lead us into a different path of the music we were used to play. We started to listen more and more to bands that didn't sound like anything we were used to hear. Motala has always been some kind of a hardcore/metal town so it felt good to play something different from others.
Our old drummer had to quit because he was living in another city going to school so we started to look after someone else. I knew Filip since we had been playing in a metal band during a short period and he was at the moment without a band.
Filip had told us that he was interested in playing with us so we took him in and rehearsed a couple of times and we all liked what we heard so we kept doing so.
By now, me, Lucas and Melker were highly influenced by bands like Moving Mountains and Explosions In the Sky. We introduced the music to Filip and kind of said "this is what we want to play!". The music grew on us and it didn't took long before we were exploring the genre of post-rock. The following weeks were quite funny because during every rehearsal with the band someone said "hey, have you ever heard Sigur Rós?" or "man, Mono's new album is just incredible".

I know that many post-rock bands say that they did never had any intentions of playing instrumental and they have completely different influences from what they play. But in our case we really wanted to play post-rock or whatever you want to call it because it was so new, fresh and different from everything else we had heard before.

Could you explain the meaning of your name a bit?

- ✿ Eric: We have always been having trouble with coming up with band names and the reason we choose Bergmál is just a coincidence I guess.
Me and Melker are classmates and we had a swedish lesson reading about other Scandinavian countries' languages (it's a part of the swedish culture history). When we read some of the icelandic words we found a word that we thought was cool, bergmál (bergmál in swedish). If you are going to translate the icelandic word directly into english it will be something like "Mountain's language" meaning "echo". We discussed it with Filip and Lucas and they all liked it so we took it as a band name.

Furthermore, would you mind giving a translation of the titles of your two releases as well and maybe add some lines on what they deal with?

- ❖ **Unni**
- ❖ **Under Månen Lever Jag**

- ✿ Eric: "Unni" was named after a girl in Filip's class who have painted both of our artworks. Since we we're so happy with the result we thought we should name the EP after her.

"Under Månen Lever Jag" means "Under the moon I live". We got the name from one of the swedish poet Erik Axel Karlfeldt's poems "Sub Luna" ("under the moon" in english)

Did you record the first demo yourself or did you visit a studio already? The latest one -- Under Månen Lever Jag – was recorded at the Vintage Loft Studio, or? Are you satisfied with the result and how would you describe the differences in the sound between the two releases?

- ⊗ Melker: The first EP "Unni" was recorded outside our hometown in a studio as well. We kind of rushed through recording-process due to the lack of money. Yeah, "Under Månen Lever Jag" was recorded at Vintage Loft Studio. We are very happy with the sound our producer Anders managed to get. The two releases can't even be compared because of our musical development as a band since "Unni" and thanks to Anders who made the EP as good as it ever could be.

Why did you pick the VLS. Is it specialized on post-rock bands or does it have other advantages?

- ⊗ Melker: We just found his myspace through another swedish post-rock band called Dorena and since their album sounded really great we wanted to achieve the same quality of sound as they did. We think we did.
Both of your releases have some well crafted and fascinating cover artworks. Who is/was responsible for it? Are these created before or after the music was done; in the sense of: how does the music and the artwork relate together?
- ⊗ Melker: As we mentioned before Unni Palmgren is responsible for the artworks. We just gave her some ideas and she blew away all of our expectations with her works. She made the artworks after the recordings were done as a complement to what we had created.
We kind of like the idea of mixing a natural thing like a tree or an owl with something surreal like Unni did on our latest release, a city on an owl's back.

Compared with the Unni release, Under Månen Lever Jag sounds more experimental, less loaded and lighter. There is more room in the compositions and arrangements. Why did you proceed on this path and what influenced you in terms of other bands and/or styles?

- ⊗ Melker: I don't know actually. I guess we all started to listen more to other post-rock and indie bands which influenced us.
- ✿ Eric: That's a hard question. We have put a lot of more work in every song. Working slowly and really asked ourselves "Do we really need to have drums or guitars here?" or "What could we do to make this sound heavier or more chaotic?"
Some post-rock can be really obvious. I mean, you always know what comes next. I don't say we aren't obvious...because that's a hard thing to not be, especially in post-rock.
You can hear quite clearly when the ambience is changing and when something is going to happen. That's why we try to do something more experimental as you say...a lot of our rehearsals are actually just jams and improvising.

Livet Efter from Unni has vocals in it, while the rest of the album is instrumental. Your latest album has also one track with them: Hindenburg and aside from this only in the way of samples. Why does this aspect play such a minor role in your concept and why do these two tracks have some of them in it?

- ✿ Eric: We only have vocals on parts where we believe it will make a powerful impact. Same goes with the samples. If you over-use vocals or samples it may not be as powerful as you want it to be...
- ⊗ Melker: Yeah, my voice is so beautiful that I can only use it for like two songs and when I start to sing, people actually cry... Just kidding.
- ✿ Eric: No, they really cry...it's horrible.

What does the track Hindenburg from the album Under Månen Lever Jag refer to? The ship or the person?

- ⊗ Melker: Actually we were just thinking about the tragic accident when the ship Hindenburg exploded during its attempt to dock a mooring mast in New York 1937, killing 35 of the 97 people on board. It's amazing that so many survived if you look at the footage. The sample in the song is from a live-broadcast during the accident and we thought it resembled quite well with the feelings we got everytime we played the song. Therefore we named it Hindenburg.

Actually, as the music lacks vocals in general, how do the titles of the compositions relate to the music? And what comes first: the idea of composing something on a subject and with it certain impressions on the sound; or the riffs and with it certain arrangements which form the basis, while a name is attached later?

- ✿ Eric: Band names and song names, in my opinion the hardest things to come up with. We never compose something on a subject. When we have finished a song we try to figure out what it reminds us of and then try to find a sentence or a word that fits. The song "luftfärden" for example means "air voyage" and that was what the song reminded us of. It kind of felt like you were floating over the ground.
- ✿ Melker: There's funny story behind the name "Glasregn". We had no good name for the song and we were practising in our rehearsal space. Then Eric decided to show off his dancing skills and accidentally crashed a lamp that were hanging from the roof with his bass. Therefore the name "Glass rain".

What about samples? How do they come into play? Do you search for something that might fit into the atmosphere or the style or do you have a certain amount of them available; a collection of odd sounds and fragments taken from B-movies or commercial ... etc.?

- ✿ Eric: We just look around for something that we think might fit. Filip was searching for some cool samples on the internet and found the live broadcast from the Hindenburg-disaster, 1937. We all thought that the broadcast was really touching and emotional so we tried it one of our songs and it did just fit perfectly. The reason why we have samples is pretty much the same why we have vocals. If we feel that it enhance the feeling or the song in general, then we will take it.

Often these samples add an ironic touch to the music as their content tends to be quite hilarious and out of the 'normal' context. Such can also be found on your latest recording. Should music be more light-hearted and have some neat little twists in the message?

- ✿ Eric: That's nothing intentional. The sample in "Dagdrömmar" has a little happy twist I guess before the "breakdown" in the end. But the original speech in itself is very serious. It's Princess Elizabeth greetings to the children of England during the blitz, 1940. We have just taken out certain parts that we thought might add in to our songs.

What is important for you in terms of the song-writing? As your music is rather experimental, what aspects need to be fulfilled in order to make you satisfied with the composition?

- ✿ Melker: The most important thing is that everyone gets the "feeling" so to speak. When we start jamming on a song and someone doesn't like a certain part, then we'll just break it and try to rebuild it or in the worst case just start all over again on a total new song. We do not really have any requirements for our songs. What feels good often sounds good!

Is the whole band involved in the song-writing or is it limited to some of the members?

- ✿ Melker: Everybody in the band is involved during the songwriting. One of us could come up with a small idea or a riff, then everyone starts to add their own things and eventually we have a new song. I guess we work as most other bands out there.

As the label 'post' is mentioned in terms of your band, I wonder how you see 'normal' music. Do you see its concept as too strict and limited or are you able to enjoy it anyway?

- ✿ Melker: We are able to enjoy it anyway because it's another type of music. Just because ordinary rock music has its structure doesn't mean we don't like it. Post-rock has its structures as well, with often long build-ups and a climax at the end. In fact we do not really listen to post-rock that much anymore. Of course we still love it but it's good to let other music in as well. We have a really wide taste of music in our band. We listen to everything from indie to jazz.

What about live shows? Did you have had a chance to play in front of an audience and do you plan to do so? In case you already hit the stage, how have your experiences been? What kind of people attend to your concert?

- ✿ Eric: We have played a handful of shows and the respond is almost always great! Though, Sweden is not really the place for a "local band" to be. There are good places where all kinds of people come to listen to new music. But most of the time there is just a lack of interest. It's kind of hard for us to develop and reach out to new cities sometimes! But we use internet to promote ourselves and that's a great way to find gigs in our region.

What artists and bands do you take your inspiration from? Are there certain albums you like to turn to again and again for enlightenment or the sort? What about literature and other realms of the arts?

- ✿ Melker: Moving Mountains' both EPs "Pneuma" and "foreword" are brilliant. "young mountain" by this will destroy you is sick as well. Circa Survive's new album "blue sky noise" is great as well, like the rest of Circa's releases.
- ✿ Eric: "Slow Riot For New Zero Kanada" by Godspeed you! Black Emperor is probably the greatest post-rock release ever in my opinion, goosebumps everytime. I also listen to a lot of jazz. Miles Davis, Count Basie, John Coltrane, Herbie Hancock and Jaco Pastorius are all giants that I admire very much. Another record that never gets old is "For Emma, Forever Ago" by Bon Iver, I love that album.

Sometimes music is described as a set of colours and it was even attempted to create pictures with the help of music; via computer program. How do you see your art and in which tones would you see it?

- ✿ Melker: I have never really thought about it that way but we have heard about people who have, tough question...I don't know really!

How do you see netlabels and the Internet? Your first output was distributed by the DNA Collective, while your latest one is spread by Bandcamp and advertised on your MySpace site. Do like this way of distributing music or has it become too difficult to receive some recognition?

- ✿ Eric: Netlabels are great I guess. We joined the DNA collective and they gave us confidence because they were the first who really discovered and wanted to help us. We do not have any promoters or such. So we try to spread our music every way we can and I think that Bandcamp is a great idea where a small band like us can promote ourselves and sell our music.

What about the Creative Commons? Do you perceive this as a means to deal with the inflation of music in the wide open spaces of the Internet? Or are they unable to stand up to the challenges of the modern era?

- ✿ Eric: We have never heard about the Creative Commons, I'm actually reading about right now and it looks awesome! Thanks for the tip!

Is there a chance to see 'Under Månen Lever Jag' released on CD or tape or ...?

- ✿ Melker: Yes it is! We are planning right now on printing some CD's. We have the design ready for the case so we are almost good to go!

How can people get in touch with you? Where can people buy your music?

- ✿ Eric: You can contact us on our mail: bergmalofficial@live.com, facebook (type in bergmål) or myspace (www.myspace.com/bergmalmusic). If you would like to buy our music you can find it on iTunes, Bandcamp and mp3Amazon. We are also on Spotify!

Some closing comments?

- ✿ Melker: Since we needed some extra help, a friend of ours recently joined the band! His name is Isak Åslund and he will play guitar, bass and the synth. He will also be handling the samples with his great Mac!

Thank you all for spending your time reading and thank you "oneyoudontknow" for an awesome magazine!, hope you will enjoy our music!

Bergmál - Under Månen Lever Jag

(Sweden; Post-rock, Experimental)

6 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (34:30)

www.myspace.com/bergmalmusic

This is the second release of the Swedish band also the second review they receive in this magazine; no, not an overtly strange coincidence. While the first demo was spread under the banner of the Italian DNA Experimental Netlabel – now: DNA Collective –, Bergmál chose to distribute their latest output by themselves and free from the boundaries of any kind of association. Thanks to the Internet and many modern sites it has become easier to do so.

Not only was this a step into a new direction also the music has a different vibe and atmosphere. Having been produced in a professional studio – see the interview for more information on this matter – the sound is clearer, the music more balanced and in a way that supports the instruments in a really good way and enables them to unleash their potential. From the background a bass supports the guitars, while they

Unni, the first output, had some typical post-rock elements in it and these could be identified easily. The compositions had a slightly dark and melancholic touch back then, an impression fostered by the production as well as the sound.

This has shifted. It is necessary to emphasize the experimental nature of the Bergmál's performance on their latest release, which can be found in the numerous ways the music tends to drift off into ambient realms for instance. Samples as well as vocals make an appearance, but rather on a small scale and the listener might rather be surprised to find them. Speaking of samples, they add a nice and charming note to the music, as some of them have a 'fascinating' content.

Two releases and there is a considerable gap between these. Differences, whose existence cannot be neglected or even ignored pop-up to someone familiar with both of them and they reveal the evolution the band has taken since. From a rather limited post-rock perspective with a close formulation of the 'musical formula' a move towards something broader was taken and they take the listener through stages of slow (and funny) over to faster and intense moments. Music that pushes you towards pure joy in one moment and holds you back in another, this facet appears on a certain scale on this album.

Fortsättning would be my favourite track, because it has a nice electronic motive whose part adds a nice twist to the music and it reminds me of something ... something I am not able to name ... but somewhere in the back of the head it stirs something up. Time will tell whether I will be able to unravel this mystery.



Il Serpe del Mondo

Hey, how are you? Would you mind introducing your band a bit?

Hello oneyoudontknow, everything's fine. My project "Il Serpe del Mondo" is devoted to electronic and ambient music. I'm the only official member, but during this time I've collaborated with other artists and friends which I had found they could enrich the final experience of my music.

What made you start this band and why did you write in a 'promotion file' on your website that it was alive, dead and reborn? Could you elaborate the history of Il Serpe del Mondo a bit?

Being the only member, and not bound to any contract, the only fuel behind this project is my motivation. It all began in 2007, when I started composing music on my computer. It was all an experiment, born from the enthusiasm of discovering a whole new genre of music: ambient. It was charming, deep, fascinating and yet so simple and minimalistic. A couple of songs were born during that time but, because of their amateurish feel, only "Contemplazione" was put into my full-length. After, I just forgot the whole project. For a year and a half, I stopped composing or even caring about it. Usually, my taste in music floats a lot between genres, and ambient made its time after months of monopoly. Interest dropped, and so was Il Serpe del Mondo. That's why 2008 was a year of death. But then, just when I was thinking about deleting myspace and all the drafts, motivation came back. It happened after having a chat with another guy from an Italian electronic project. Don't know if it was for spirit of competition or just for a renewed interest for computer made music, but it happened, and I reopened the project with a full-length already in mind.

Il Serpe del Mondo, what does this name mean and what are you referring to? How does the cover artwork of the album fit into this?

Il Serpe del Mondo translates into "The World Serpent", and refers to Jörmungandr, the snake god, son of Loki in Nordic Mythology. It's depicted as a giant snake who lives in the ring of water outside Midgard, the land of Man. Due to his gargantuan size, he manages to bite his tail. During Ragnarök, the World's End, he'll rise from the water and poison the Earth along with his brother, Fenris, and the army of dead and giants that will clash against the Gods and their champions. Having always been in love with Nordic Mythology, Jörmungandr was chosen as my monicker long before "Il Serpe del Mondo" came to life. Its name so came spontaneous, for that project was born to be my personal project.

Besides that, the symbolic power of the ouroboros, the snake that eats his own tail, married perfectly with the mystic and spiritual intentions behind the content of the songs. It's a symbol common in many cultures, from the far East to the West, with various meanings, from time and eternity, to samsara (the karmic circle in Hindu and Buddhist religions). It's a universal symbol and it fascinates me for that.

Is this your first band or have you been (are you) involved in other projects? In case this would be true, what are these and kind of music do or did you play there?

Yes, I've been in other two bands. I was the singer of a gothic metal band called Morak. We recorded an EP and after that I left both because my voice was fucking up badly due to metal singing style and because I was moving to Bologna for university. They recorded a full-length some time later and then disbanded. Everything's free on the internet so check them out if you like the genre. Now I'm in a, let's say, rock band called Zang! . I really cannot describe the music we do because it's a mix of rock, punk, nonsense humor and Dadaism. Mostly played really badly. It's not the kind of band you'd expect from the mind behind an ambient / spiritual project like Il Serpe del Mondo, that's for sure.

What kinds of instruments or tools were used for recording your debut album? And when it comes to recording the music, how was this achieved? Did you have had a chance to use a studio?

Most of the soundscapes are electronic and recorded in front of my computer, with a midi keyboard on my lap. Some instruments, like most of the flutes, are played live though. No studio, just a microphone and some mixing and mastering to make them sound good and clean (or dusty and ethereal). I play some folk instruments during my spare time, and you can find some of them in my songs: for example, a piece of my medieval bagpipes set, was used in the beginning of Illuminazione.

Your music has influences from the Middle East. Why did you pick this region and could you point to artists/bands that influenced you while composing this album?

Indian and middle-eastern music are definitely a profound influence, especially in the drum patterns, but there's something I need to specify. My music is totally western music. I draw inspiration from other cultures but I'm rooted, willingly or not, on my conception of music. Actually this doesn't limit itself on music, but enshrouds the whole concept behind *Il Serpe del Mondo*. I wrote on myspace "L'Orizzonte Onirico" (The Oniric Horizon): this expression was used by LeGoff, a French historian, to describe what happens in the mind of people when they project their fantasies, their desires and their dreams on another place. Just think about what has been the Far East for the West for many centuries: a land of mysticism, spirituality, spices, wealth and even strange creatures (Marco Polo's "Il Milione" is a worthy example). Obviously, this is not true. Still, these fantasies, these dreams fascinates me deeply, often more than reality itself. *Il Serpe del Mondo* is founded on this feeling, on dreams, on fantasies and on the process of trying to know the unknown.

Musically speaking, two major artists influenced me: Karl Sanders, with his omonymous project, and Paul Ruskay, composer of the soundtrack of the videogame series *Homeworld*. You can clearly hear the influence they had on my project, and still I consider their ability unparalleled. As you can see from the names, they're both western composers.

Generally, your music has a lot of ambient influences. Why did you pick this genre? What artists/bands/albums made you play this particular kind of music? Was there a certain piece of music that gave you a push into this direction?

Ambient is a strange genre. Listening and composing ambient music doesn't work as usual because it's not necessary that you master an instrument. It's all about atmosphere and the ability to express it. Brian Eno called it "non-music", not only because it doesn't follow the usual patterns of tempo, notations but also because the composer is not really a musician. The artists that inspired, besides Sanders and Ruskay, are definitely Ulf Soederberg, Michael Stearns and even Dead Can Dance.

Ambient music often feels like some sort of a film or certain scenery. Through your music, to what kind of distant place is a listener able to travel to?

I prefer not to bind the listener to a single scenery. I like to leave it open to interpretation and to personal preference, but I always give some hints on my point of view. Being vague and rather obscure on the references sometimes can be more effective than explaining everything. Some listeners might be able to catch the link to Lovecraft novels or the Planescape universe, others will only enjoy the pictures that come up in their mind, maybe even more than those I would have put in my music.

A lot of your tracks follow a simple and even predictable style. Why is this minimalism important to you and what do you try to express through it?

The songs just "felt right" that way when I was composing. It was my style and also my limit. Most of those songs were like crescendo mantras: while the background kept repeating itself, new instruments emerged and changed the way one could listen to the song.

Is the current approach, as laid out above, also the one you like continue to develop or will the art see a change into a more diverse set of atmospheres and concepts? How do you see the future of your band from today's perspective?

Probably I won't go on with this approach. I like to change and evolve, but it's all written in water so don't take it too strictly. Now, I 'd like to experiment some different sounds and moods, probably something more electronical, cybernetic and less ambient. The future will know.

When it comes to emotions and how these are expressed through the music, which of these can be found in your art?

To me, a bit of desperation, sadness and longing are somehow dominant ones.

I like to put melancholy in some of my songs and, according to your feedback, it seems to emerge even in those songs that wasn't meant to be melancholic. A Hundred Carven Gates and the Outro are surely the brightest (or, let's say, most gloomy) examples of that attitude. But I see other songs, like *Illuminazione* or *Under Fire*, inscribed in a rather epic, dark and earthly mood. They're meant to move your guts and flood your brain with a full sound and thundering drums.

Do you use field-recordings for your music? The track Caravans suggests as much. Or how did you create this blowing of the wind for instance?

Yes, I use some field recordings in my songs, both recorded by me or by others. The wind is not one of those, though. It's a very valid digital synth I found in my sound libraries. Your question has just confirmed that it sounds very real.

The longest composition on Il Serpe del Mondo would be 'A Hundred Carven Gates'. Charles Byrant is the 'obvious' reference here. Why did you pick him above all and why this particular text? Where could someone find it? Do you have had some reference or the sort?

A Hundred Carven Gates was one of those songs that came to life first in my head and then by my hands. Its concept is strictly connected to Lovecraft's "The Silver Key" and, specifically, to a passage where Randolph Carter, the protagonist and Lovecraft's alter ego, remembers his childhood dreams, full of wonders and mighty visions. It was a firm critique against the realism, the greyness of life and the exaggerated rationalization of the mind. In the beginning, the project was to read personally that passage but then, surfing the internet, I came to know Charles Bryant and his amazing work. The poem I used already existed before I had discovered it, so I just asked Charles if I could have used it in my song. His version is also very personal and slightly modified, so it was more than a mere reading.

Is there a chance to find an adaptation of some other work on a forthcoming album? What are the requirements for you to get you motivated to deal with it? Moreover, do you prefer contemporary or rather older literature?

Lovecraft was deeply connected to Il Serpe del Mondo because of its interest in dreams, visions, wonders and the unknown itself. Other "intellectual" influences transcend literature and find a link also in some rather unusual medias, like videogames. Going beyond the mundane and make me wonder is the first and foremost aspect they need to have. About the oldness of sources, I try not to bind myself to only older works but, yes, most of my literary influences have, at least, a hundred years.

What about the feedback on your album? How has this been so far?

Il Serpe del Mondo hasn't spread much and it still remains quite underground, so there aren't many opinions to look at. But all the feedback received has been positive or even enthusiastic. I cannot but be happy for this.

In your music you use samples or better said fragments from the Freesound Project. In which of the compositions can these be found and what is the purpose of this site? Could you present it a little bit?

The Freesound Project is a nice community. A lot of amateur field recorders, audiophiles and music enthusiasts gather there and offer their works and recordings for others. All you need to give in return is to give them credit. It's just a matter of respect so not everyone does it. Personally I've found really nice sounds there, especially soundscapes and ambient sounds.

In a file on your homepage you write the following:

The first work, named as the project itself, is a journey through different dreamstates in search of spiritual Enlightenment.

Will you walk the Endless Path of Illumination?

To what kind of 'spiritual Enlightenment' are you referring you? In the sense of the Judeo-Christian history of Europe or something that attempts to approach this topic from a broader point of view? How do you see the old philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Socrates?

I'm not bound to a specific religion or thought but my concept of "Illumination" is nearer to the oriental and mystic sense of the term. The discovery of self is functional to the discovery of the whole universe (or God) and not the contrary. Its end is utopian. Life's a journey and I think it's necessary to try to improve our minds and not only our bodies. We can draw inspiration from important figures like Buddha or even Jesus Christ, but I think every path is different. Does that mean that every journey has a different end? Or is the end unique? But then, who can we really consider "illuminated"? I cannot answer to these questions and probably I'll never be able to. Everyone else should try to find those answers and be able to drop them when they find them insufficient. It's an endless journey, or an endless struggle, but it keeps us alive, it keeps us human and, through that, we were, are, and will be able to find some answers. Once a man stops searching, he becomes an animal. Or illuminated.

Generally, I like philosophers. They are men who question everything and they're capable to deconstruct even the most rooted thoughts. I love Socrates for this. While being the master of

deconstruction he didn't fall in one of the traps of philosophy, which is nihilism, or losing contact with reality. He maintained a firm personal moral in front of life, choosing to die instead of saving himself and not his ideas. At least, for what we know. The second and most widespread trap of philosophy is to fill the void created by deconstruction with absolutes. Most of those absolutes are like "rooted answers", granted for true by their creators. Plato, Aristotle and countless others built a system inside the void. Coherent or not, complex or not, acceptable or not, it was just an intellectual exercise. I think that scientific method started a real revolution in the history of mankind.

Could you further elaborate the aspect of the dreamstates and of the Endless Path of Illumination a bit more?

I've linked these ideas of longing for answer with dreams or, better, conscious dreams. I'm a lucid dreamer myself, which means I can retain a bit of consciousness during sleep and control the content of dreams, so all those Lovecraft's novels about dreamquests and mysterious worlds "beyond the walls of sleep" picked some deep strings in me. In *Il Serpe del Mondo*, dreams take the role of meditation and so the journey is not only a metaphor, but a "real" experience. As I said before, I try to leave open interpretation so, actually, both levels of reading are true. Every step is covered, from falling asleep to awakening. Small hints are given by the titles, the mood and the (rare) lyrics and explaining them one by one would be really difficult even for me. They are meant mainly to evoke something and, only then, to be rationalised and understood. But, due to their openness, my view would also be a limit.

Where could someone find this expressed in the music? Is it a certain atmosphere or a certain tension; is it the use of special instruments or some recitation of texts?

The atmosphere overall is what really expresses the meaning of a song. The details are just meant to be part of the whole, with no real meaning if taken alone. Crescendos also play a major role, because I find they express very well the "building up" of the tension. Sometimes this tension ends abruptly, leaving the listener overwhelmed, but sometimes the song goes on in a very different manner, like in *Rovine*. It's all functional to what the listener's gonna feel, while obviously following the "spirit" of the song, i.e. what it wants to express.

As you refer to something spiritual, how do you see proselytising? Can something good come out of it?

Proselyting would be the salt of the earth if it wasn't meant to be one way. The role of the proselyte is to bring truth, while being closed to external influences. There should be an exchange of truths, in order to find a common ground or a higher truth.

Furthermore, as you speak of Enlightenment, how do you see the aspect of metaphysics? Some refer to it as dead – especially in our times of continued groundbreaking scientific endeavours. What would your opinion on this 'area of conflict' be?

In everyday life, I describe myself a scientific, rational and skeptical person. But we humans know very little. Metaphysics covers the unknown and it is necessary to life, to morals and to ideals. We cannot base our society and our life on mere math calculations. We need to long for something greater. The real problem is when people try to bash even the little we know with assumptions based on the unknown.

Why do you spread your music via a netlabel and not on a CDr yourself or via a label that would 'sell' your music?

Well, because I don't have a contract! And also because I'm not very interested in selling my music or making money with it. At least, it has never been my primary objective when I decided to start this project, so I'm just broadcasting my music to be heard. But if someone's gonna offer me money for what I consider a pleasure, sure I won't refuse that.

Do you know some other netlabels besides the DNA Collective? Could you present some to the readers of this magazine?

Not many others actually, I'm not too into the underground music scene. Also, I don't think there are many netlabels who just broadcast their artists without selling albums, so credits to D.N.A. for their amazing work.

How do you see the Creative Commons? A., who runs the DNA Collective, presented his opinion in the preceding issue of this magazine. Could you elaborate your perspective on this matter as well? (Positive/negative, whatever you like)

Creative Commons is a really good idea, on paper. The real problem is that it is based on respect and trust, and most people just don't care. They offer a great service to artists, because they give a nice set of variable rules that can save a lot of time to those who want to spread their works. Sadly, it gives no safety against plagiarism, so artists need to rely on other methods anyway. Creative Commons is great to compensate those methods, but not enough stand alone.

You are working on a new release, right? At least your MySpace site says so. Could you give us some hints on the direction the band will be heading towards? Why will it be only an ep?

Yes, I was actually working on a new EP, but everything stopped some months ago. Most of the work is done but it doesn't convince me. Probably because my old sound doesn't convince me either, and those songs are definitely "old sound". I might publish them anyway, after polishing what has been done, but the future of "Il Serpe del Mondo" will probably be different.

How can people contact you?

My mail dreamquest[dot]kadath[at]gmail[dot]com is the safest and most checked among the contact methods. It took the place of Myspace because, after they changed layout and everything, I started hating it.

Any final words, comments or rants?

Thank you very much for this interview and for the great work you do with A Dead Spot Of Light. And many thanks also to those who supports Il Serpe del Mondo and appreciate its music. May you inspire those you admire.

Josef Nadek

Hey how are you?

Quite ok, thanks. I have got some problems, just like everybody else, but nothing special concerning Josef Nadek.

What made you, an Austrian, play this particular kind of music and when did your adventure in the realms of this art start?

Josef Nadek started in January 2009. I just felt it to be the proper kind of art to express myself. Besides I can't play any instruments very well. ;-)

Who is Josef Nadek?

Josef Nadek is an artificial character, whose name is derived from the 20th century horror novel "The case of Charles Dexter Ward" by H.P. Lovecraft.

Were you involved in other projects as well? In case this would be true, what were these?

I recorded some Black Metal stuff with bands like Aeon and Irrlicht back in the 90s. I also did some experimental music tapes with a band called Darkage at this time. To be honest, this was pretty weak stuff, but hey.... I was young. You can find more informations on this releases here: <http://www.metal-archives.com/>

What are the core aspects of your music? How would you succinctly boil down the music of Josef Nadek? Is there something you always return to and from which you start another adventure if you like?

I randomly vomit music after excessively swallowing informations on a certain topic. Therefore Josef Nadek is called "bulimic art for its own sake and glory".

How do you record your music? Do you have certain ideas and sounds that come to your mind and that you attempt to explore to a greater degree? Are there images, is there poetry or are there collages whose concepts have an influence on you?

It could be more described as getting rid off something, that makes me sick. I would call it an uncontrolled act of regurgitation & shame.

Do you have a certain amount of abandoned ideas or concepts that might be released in the future?

Yes, but I won't tell yet. ;-)

Do you use 'real' instruments as well or do you solely rely on electronic tools?

I mainly rely on electronic tools.

What about samples? You use some of them in your music. What do you try to express through them? What is their advantage over 'normal' vocals?

The samples are meant to add atmosphere to the tracks and to give a clue about the concept. I prefer them to vocals because they often have an intrinsic meaning.



Do you record some of them yourself or do you rely on the endless stream of pointless music and films thrown upon the masses of the public?

Sometimes I record them myself. Sometimes I rely on films, speeches and so on. It depends on what I want to express.

When it comes to noise, then the listener might have to endure a variety of types of sounds and noises. These can range from calm and hardly recognizable over to aggressive and hardly bearable. How do you see the relationship between you as a 'noise'-artist and the person who has to 'endure' your art? Do you have this aspect in mind when you compose music?

Since my work is created during a very intimate catharsis, I do not think of the listener at all, sorry.

Do you perceive your art as liberation from what the mass media bombards us on a daily basis? Is there an attempt in your oeuvre to expose the underlying principles as well as the double standards in what someone is able to find in the radio and the 'films'?

The mass media sucks. This is a theme I mentioned several times in my songs. Just listen to the "Nihil" split album.

Should noise receive a broader attention or should it remain in this void it is currently in?

A broader attention would have the same effect as mass media has in every other scene. It would corrupt noise.

You told me some of the background of the release [Zak] (Uncut) in an e-mail already, but as these are not open and available to the public, why don't you shed some light on it in this interview? The reason for labelling it as 'Uncut' might not be clear from the start.

"[zak]" was inspired by the book "World War Z - an oral history of the zombie wars" by Max Brooks.

The term "[zak]" or "Zack" stands for "Zombie" and was used in the book by the military, just like "Charlie" in Vietnam.

"[zak]" was released by the TVK Netlabel and because of the large amount of downloads I decided to make a limited CDr version, which I distributed for free. These releases are marked as "uncut".

Because the 30 minutes track was not suitable for a compilation, I made a shorter (cut) version named "[zak] feat. David Barrows", which appeared on the "An Unattainable Idea" compilation by Cubiculo Noise Recording. David Barrows is the newsreader in the remake of "Dawn of the dead".

The track is intended to be background music, while reading the book. Just think of a locked room, a dusty table with a military radio on it, sending an automatic sos-signal every few minutes and a corpse on the floor, showing signs of severe headwounds, while the streets are overtaken by the walking dead.

You cite H.P. Lovecraft as an influence. Well, this is not uncommon the darker regions of art, but what are your reasons for picking him amongst all others? Compared to him, what would your opinion on Poe be, if you have any?

I don't know exactly. Lovecraft's writings just give me a thrill. Of course I like Poe, too. But writers like Poe or Stoker rely on more or less typical archetypes, when it come to fear. On the other hand Lovecraft is special.

Do you have a certain work of HP that is able to fascinate you more than anything else?

Not really. I like them all.

I wonder if you have read 'H. P. Lovecraft: Against the World, Against Life' by 'Michel Houellebecq'. In it he places him among the great writers of human history, praises his works excessively and gives an interesting account of the life and evolution of the man Lovecraft. Would you share this sentiment?

Sorry, I haven't read it. But Lovecraft should be definitely counted among the great writers of human history.

How do you deal with Lovecraft's racism; 'Shadow over Innsmouth' for instance has a lot of racial connotations... especially towards the end?

Lovecraft's writings should be seen and understood in a historical context.

You have also written some music on him or better said on the myth that was established by him. From your perspective: should music attempt to create something that might resemble the atmospheres and tensions of the archetype; in the sense that certain passages of Lovecraft's works require certain atmospheres, noises and the like? Or should the composer take all the liberties no matter what? (I want to ask you this, because sometimes I get the feeling that bands just take some of their older stuff, add some Lovecraft [or of any other writer] lyrics and label it as being influenced by said person; I could name a score of examples).

Hahaha, I know what you mean. I have often checked out bands with a lovecraftian image, which disappointed me a lot. It takes more than just screaming "lä lä Cthulhu" to fulfil the standards of Lovecraft's writings. I think noise and ambient music is often suited best to do so.... better than any other style e.g. Heavy Metal.

Aside from this American writer, are there others whose writings you are able to enjoy as well?

Of course there are others. But I'm not only interested in writings, but in other media, too. Just check out Monika Cichon on <http://www.monikacichon.com/> for example.

Your discography lists several split releases. Why do you pick this way of 'distributing' your art? Do these kinds of albums have a certain fascination for you? How do you get in touch with the bands?

Well, I have been asked to do such a release each time.

What are the requirements for an artist to appear on a split with you?

There are no special requirements. I just have to find the other artist kind of interesting.

Aside from this, you also seem to have a fancy for collaborations? How do these happen? Do you send some stuff to the other artists/band and vice versa? Are you satisfied with the outcomes of these works?

As I have stated before, I always have been asked to make a split release. I usually do not exchange tracks and work on my own, but for a collaboration song the soundfiles are being sent to every participating artist. Some of these songs are sounding better than the others. That's just normal.

Most of your music is available for free? Why not on a CD or tape like many other noise/ambient artists tend to do it?

I usually prefer digital downloads. In this way my stuff can be much more easier distributed and you are able to reach a larger amount of people.

Maybe you could share your thoughts on Creative Commons and Fair Use? Are these two alternatives which can help to overcome the too strict and dated Copyright?

Never really thought about it. It's just an easy way to protect my work. I rely on Creative Commons.

What about some new stuff? Is there anything like this in sight?

There should be a Digipack CD being released this year on the Kultur[terrorismus] Label. I am also working on a single, that will be available for free download on the Surrism-Phonoethics Netlabel.

How can people contact you? Do you have certain sites and blogs in which your music can be downloaded?

Just visit my profiles on MySpace, Facebook, Reverbnation and Bandcamp for detailed informations and various links on this topic.

Some final comments you would like to share?

Thanks for your support.

Mafu Mafu

Actually, I wanted to use a Japanese greeting, but being aware of the complexity and problems of addressing someone properly in this language, I will refute to a simply: Hi, how are you?

Hi! I'm K-no , the drummer of Mafu Mafu. I'm enjoying everyday.

Where are you from and when did you start Mafu Mafu? Did you found it or how did everything happen back then?

From Tokyo. Mafu Mafu started in 2006. I made friends with the bassist Kayayan, so we decided to start a new band.

Actually, can you translate the name a bit? Why did you pick it and how do the 'cats' play into this?

mmm, nobody would be able to translate. "Mafu Mafu" is a mimetic word. Imagine you held a cat and pet its soft body.

I believe that a popular metal band must have its own character like eddie from Iron Maiden.

You really seem to like this kind of animal do you? It seems natural to ask whether you own some yourself.

Yes, I love a cat very very much. I owned one , but he gone last autumn. I miss him.

When did you start playing music and kind of instruments can you handle?

I started to play piano when I was six. In fact, "I was made to play by parents" just like most of boys.

Then, I started to play drums at 10 years old. Now I play drums, piano, guitar, and shamisen(Japanese three strings instrument)

Back to the main topic of the interview:

What had your intentions been back then when the band was founded? What bands influenced you or did you try to make something different?

I just wanted to play a new metal music which no one ever seen.

At first, I was trying to mix hardcore punk with classical music.

In 2007 you released the demo かみごろし. How did it sound and did you play this fascinating as well as 'weird' type of music already?

Yes. The main point of our sound concept did not change so much.

Judging from the titles some of the tracks on ぼく、まふねこ。 appeared on かみごろし already. Did you change them over the years or do the same versions appear on both releases?

A little changed. Because our keyboardist replaced in 2008. Latter keyboardist added different taste to our songs.

How have the responses to it been? Is it possible to find it somewhere still?

I'm surprised that everyone enjoys the album. Some shops in Japan still deal.

The cover artwork looks a bit drastic. Who created it and why did you pick it? How does it relate to the music?

My girlfriend created first. Later, I practiced to draw the picture!!

Oh, our sound surely reminds you of a cute cat, doesn't it??

Then in 2009 your first full-length album saw the light of day and it is one hell of a trip. Weird arrangements, melodies of pure insanity, a rollercoaster trip through tons of riffs and strange arrangements. How long did it take you to compose this album and how does one have to imagine the song-writing? Were all members involved in the song-writing?

It took about one year to make this album. But we didn't take so much days to write each song. Some songs 1 or 2 days, other songs more than 3 months.

We write songs almost individually. For example, regarding my 5 songs, I compose about 85% of all instruments.

Seriously, were drugs involved in this?

No!!

Is this type of music something you have a special fascination for?

Yes.

What are the lyrics all about? They were printed in the booklet, but as I am unable to speak Japanese, I have some difficulties in understanding them.

It is difficult to explain about lyrics. They have various theme,,life, love, humanity, certain scenery, hatred, and so on...

What bands played a vital role in terms of this album? Where did you take your inspiration from? Did all musicians have a similar musical background?

mmm...Each member likes different type of music...so, I cannot decide one or two bands favorit. Mafu Mafu is a mixture of many many former bands.

How would you describe your music in a few words? What are its core essences?

Chaos and truth ... "C" "A" "T" !!

How does one have to understand the cover artwork? What do these two different kinds of cats represent?

It represents two faces of our sound ; brutality and tenderness.

This contrast can be found in everything in this world.

Where did you produce your albums? Did you visit a professional studio for the recording sessions?

Cheap cheap rehearsal studio. We don't have enough money!

You wrote to me that your band broke up, after one of the members (スナフキン) left the band and no proper replacement could be found. Why so? Why was it so difficult to find someone who would be able to play the same kind of music?

There are two reasons.

One; nobody understand our style! Most of metal musicians in Japan are too conservative to play with us.

Two; only very few people sing well in Japan, not only in metal music but in all genres.

Might there be a chance to see this band resurrected in the future?

You might see this band as likely as you see a 5-meter cat.

Are the other members involved in new projects already?

Yes..someone has already. But maybe he left the new band and is free now.

What kind of music is dominant in Japan?

AKB48

What is the status of metal in Japan anyway? Is it able to compete with the other more populous music or is its place reduced to that of a niche. Do you have independent radio stations that play metal on a daily basis or maybe even only once in a while?

Very difficult. Metal music is on very difficult position.

I don't have any way to make metal music more popular in Japan.

What about concerts? How frequently are these and what kind of bands play there?

Oh, many concerts are held every day in cities. Metal bands also play in small club houses. But a few people come.

When it comes to metal shops, is it possible to find these in Japan? Where do you buy your metal music?

Yes. "DISK UNION" is popular. They deal musics of various genres, and have metal part where many metal fan buy CDs.

Japan is often associated in the West with a strange as well as fascinating culture. Films like 'Lost in Translation' or also Tokyo! offer light on your culture. How do you perceive ours?

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_in_Translation_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lost_in_Translation_(film))), (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tokyo!>)

Your image of Japan is not so wrong. Actually, Japan has some points much different from Western.

On the other hand, we see Western culture as something like the World itself. Most Japanese have tried to get Western culture much better than Asian country such as China for these 100 years.

What projects are you involved now and what kind of music do you play in these?

Secret...haha. I'm playing with some metal bands in Japan.

What albums have influenced you over the years? Can you name some of these?

The number of the beast / Iron Maiden

Sad wings of destiny / Judas Priest

I was listening to these 2 albums everyday when I was studying for high school entrance exam.

And... I like HELLOWEEN the most in metal music. The dark ride is one of my favorite album. I sing All Over The Nations while I walk to my University everyday.

Are there some interesting local bands you would like to recommend to the readers of this magazine?

Light Bringer

How can people contact you and in case someone is interested, where can people buy your release/s?

Please mail to this address below.

mafumafu0202@yahoo.co.jp

And, you can buy our music on very low price in "bandcamp"

<http://mafumafu.bandcamp.com/>

Some final words if you like ...

Thank you for reading!...although my English is broken.

Now MafuMafu has finished its career and I lost my own band. But I'm thinking of starting a new project. Please look forward to it.

And...Japan is suffering from the earthshaking. Pray for people in tragedy and Japan getting good again. Sincerely.

Schrei aus Stein

Hi there. How are you and how is your band Schrei aus Stein?

All is well. Schrei aus Stein has been largely dormant since the recording of Tsisnaasjini, although a cover of “Perched on a Neverending Peak” is coming out on a Velvet Cacao tribute CD via the Russian label Salts and Ashes sometime soon. New ideas are gestating, although I’m currently fighting with my recording setup a little bit.

Well, for a German the meaning of the name is pretty obvious – at least some sense can be made out of it – but I doubt that many non-Germans will grasp what you try to express. So, would you mind explaining the band name a bit? Why did you pick this particular language anyway?

The band shares its name with a Werner Herzog film about a pair of climbers attempting to summit Cerro Torre, a terrifying-looking 3000m peak in the Patagonian ice field. It’s not a particularly good film apart from the awesome alpine cinematography, but the name fits both that setting and the vibe I was after with my band.

What would your history in the music scene be? Have you been active in bands earlier or would SaS be your first one?

I’ve played in a lot of different bands, everything from pop covers to techno to krautrock to jazz to stoner metal. My longest-running project is encomiast, an ambient/drone/noise project that I’ve been working on for about 12 years. I’ve made about a dozen encomiast albums, most recently malpais on the French label Taalem. My only other foray into metal prior to Schrei aus Stein was a band named Spawn of the Matriarch that consisted of myself on bass and programming, El Otro on guitar, and a drum machine named Xylophobe. Some of the Spawn of the Matriarch material was kind of silly, but the music was quite intricately written and fairly demanding. It was an awful lot of fun until El Otro had to relocate.

What were the original intentions behind SaS? Did you have a certain type of music or a certain kind of atmosphere in mind when you started this band?

I determined the overall direction of the band during a winter hike in the Indian Peaks Wilderness in Colorado (the cover of Talus is from that trip).

My original idea was to try to record black metal with as few guitar parts as possible, using a combination of synthesizers, found sounds, and other stringed instruments. I eventually had to backtrack on this idea because the results weren’t as good in reality as they were in my head. Another initial idea was to combine droning washed-out black metal sounds with an asymmetrical rhythmic profile as opposed to just fours and sixes. I got closer to that goal, although things took some surprising detours along the way.

Your logo looks quite interesting. I cannot help myself but see in it some of the vague outlines of a face of a demon. Who created it?

I commissioned a guy I found on Myspace to do it. What he came up with had plenty of spiky grimness, but was also rather pedestrian, so I took his work and ran it through a few warping tools in Photoshop to make it as you see it now.

Let us talk about Talos first. The name refers to an ancient Greek myth. Could you elaborate on why you chose it and how does it relate to the music on the album?

The title of the album is actually “Talus,” referring to the fields of broken rocks one finds below rock faces, in keeping with the alpine focus of that album.

How long did it take you to get it done? Did you record some demos or rehearsal stuff for yourself or how did the song-writing process take place?

It took a long time, fiddling with various ideas in the computer before things came together. I’d eventually have some sort of skeletal structure and would then flesh things out from there. The pieces remained partially formed for a long time before I finished them, b/c there were a lot of false paths to contend with. I would sometimes use these embryonic versions as demos when contacting people

about the band...one of these demos also apparently took on a brief second life as a fake Velvet Cacoon track.

Why did you not print the lyrics?

Some things should remain hidden.

While the name of your debut album is rather self-explanatory, those of your latest one might leave the listener confused. Who or what is Tsisnaasjini? Where did you take it from or is this an artificial word?

Tsisnaasjini is the Navajo name for Blanca Peak, a 4300m peak in southern Colorado that was one of the four sacred peaks of the Navajo people. I've been kind of fascinated with the mountain for awhile, although I have yet to climb it.

It is a bit difficult to discuss each of the albums separate from each other without reaching the point in which the arguments are repeated over excess. Accordingly, I would like to discuss the general style of the music:

The vocals are often hardly intelligible, were reduced at times to some sort of a texture-like sound. Why do they play such a minor role in your art?

I don't really want the vocals to be privileged over the overall sound, and I find that when I'm doing mixdowns the vocals get distracting if they're too high in the mix. Plus it gives a certain sense of ego-loss to the piece. You can tell that there's a person in there somewhere, but they're partially hidden and sometimes get completely swallowed up by the surroundings.

While listening to the albums, one might get the idea that you create music from a field-recording. You haven taken some sounds from the nature, return home and then you try to mimic it with some real instruments. Therefore, the impressions gained by you and hidden from someone else becomes fixed into some sort of complex art form with the cover artwork as a secondary means to help you express yourself. How would you respond to this?

I think you're quite right. Field recordings play a crucial role in Schrei aus Stein (and encomiast, even more so), and many things that sound like instruments in the music aren't instruments at all. I'd freely admit that a lot of the specific associations behind the field recordings won't translate to the listener, if only because they don't have access to the experiences and locations that gave birth to the recordings. Some of the encomiast records that I made a few years back were made up of field recordings that were very much wedded to a particular location. In particular, this 2-disc set called 139 Nevada was based on a series of recordings I made in an abandoned theater up in the mountains in '04-05. Listening to those tracks is intensely nostalgic for me, but I'm only able to give a listener a sense of the place's sound and feeling. The cover art is then the only chance I get to make a visual impression on the listener. While I can't say that I would want to really guide the way someone listens to the music (if that would even be possible), I do want to give the listener some idea about what it means to me.

Does the general lack of 'fast and aggressive' parts – the music is generally quite calm and meanders between slow and midtempo – also attributed to this?

I found that when I tried more aggressive parts, they tended to be more disruptive than anything, especially concerning the more impressionistic aspects mentioned above. I'm also not really a shredder on the guitar, so I am playing to my own strengths in some respect as well.

On both Talus and Tsisnaasjini noise and ambient play a vital role in the music. Why is it important for you to use these facets and how do they relate to the overall concept of the band? Interestingly, you avoid a too harsh and too extreme approach in respect to these two albums and try to maintain a certain overall sedative tension.

I think the ambient sections provide the glue that holds it all together, in some ways the records are almost like ambient records with some black metal parts spicing it up. I like to keep a certain consistency to the proceedings. It's something I pay a lot of attention to in my ambient music...keeping things flowing but also not introducing sudden changes, just letting things breathe and evolve on their own. In terms of the overall sedative vibe, I tend to think of it as reflective of the peace and calmness that one experiences in alpine environments.

The music has a strange kind of flow to it, in which metal elements were nothing but woven into but without having an overtly dominant impact. What made you progress into this direction and do you feel that you have reached the point already in which you are able to refer to it as 'SaS's sound or 'style'? How would you describe it in a few words?

In some places, I'm kind of at the mercy of the field recordings. They have a chaotic quality that I have to balance against the more structured parts, and I sometimes have to follow their lead rather than the logic of my own songwriting. I particularly like the sections where the metal parts give way to the underlying noises, drawing the listener's attention to something that has been there the whole time.

I don't know if Schrei aus Stein has a definable sound yet, especially as I keep trying things that threaten to undermine it. Perhaps my buzzword should be "metal concrète," after the French "musique concrète" style of found-sound composition?

While listening to both releases I felt the latest one to be more consistent as well as 'denser'. Interestingly, Tsisnaasjini sounds like two compositions with an additional third one. Why does 'Vague As Blown Smoke' fall into a different style and sound? I would not describe it as a fifth tire or a third leg, but the way it appears disrupts the music on some respect. While writing the review on it, I felt a bit confused.

Basically it just was from a different session and has a slightly different set of instruments involved. I did the best I could with the aural shift, but I wasn't able to totally mitigate it.

According to the booklet of Tsisnaasjini: 'Lyrics found by Lisa'. How does one have to imagine this and how do these relate to the actual compositions? What is the source of these and did you use them for your music? Then, in which of the three compositions – or in all of them? – can they be found?

The lyrics were found by an artist friend of mine who does paintings and drawings on pages she finds from old discarded books. She made one for me and I adapted the words from it to the music for Tsisnaasjini, stretching them over all three pieces. I listed them as "found" because we had no idea what the source was since the original book had been lost and Google provided no clues.

What would your opinion on poetry be? Would this be something that could be combined with your type of music?

I certainly think it could be put together, although the poet might ultimately be disappointed because he or she wouldn't be able to hear the words assuming I did a mix similar to these albums! In general, though, I feel like if I did a record with a literal spoken word or recitation component, the two parts would just distract from each other. When I've heard other artists do things like that, it just feels lazy to me under most circumstances and spoils my enjoyment of both the music and the poetry. I could see it working in a live performance context though, assuming the poetry was interesting and was delivered well.

In terms of the artwork, how does this relate to the music? Do mountains and ice have a special impact on you?

They do hold a continual fascination for me, and I've been lucky to have spent the last decade or so living in and around the Rocky Mountains. I've done some amateur mountaineering and a little bit of ice climbing, although I'm still basically a complete novice when it comes to things that involve pitches of roped technical climbing. All in all, though, I find such experiences very satisfying and rejuvenative, and as noted earlier, the inspiration for Schrei aus Stein came out of these trips.

An aspect that pops-up again and again is the inability of a lot of metal bands to get their ambient parts done right. From your perspective, what makes it so difficult to find a solid and well crafted combination of ambient and metal parts? Is it merely a problem of the proper equipment or is there something more that prevents a lot of bands to overcome this obstacle.

I would tend to agree with you that there are an awful lot of poorly done ambient pieces on metal records. I think a lot of metal players struggle with ambient music because it deals with time in a very different way from metal. Ambient music unfolds over long stretches but uses a minimal amount of musical elements, and that's something that can be hard to get used to. Composing ambient music is always a tightrope act between the forces of stasis on one hand and change on the other... if there's too much stasis, the music gets boring; too much change and it starts to feel rushed. I've been making ambient music for much longer than I've been making black metal, so in some ways I have a harder time getting the metal parts to be satisfactory. I imagine the opposite is true of metal players who start dabbling in ambient music.

The lack of quality in some ambient music is certainly due to equipment issues in some instances, as a lot of folks seem heavily dependent on preset keyboard sounds that are either quite bland or that don't mix well with the other pieces on the record. I don't fault people for that too much though, since in some cases they are likely just using what they have available. To my ear, most of the problems tend to come from the fact that the artists simply aren't willing to commit to the time and effort necessary to fully work out a piece of ambient music, especially if it's surrounded by metal. A 2-minute ambient piece won't even have the chance to change the mood before shifting gears back into headbanging. It's going to need probably more like 7-10 minutes to ease the listener in, develop its ideas, and drop them back off. But that kind of commitment requires patience, risk, and maybe even a certain amount of trust between artists and listeners. I also often get the sense that artists also don't put the work in simply because the ambient parts are conceived as these rather extraneous afterthoughts and intros put in between the metal pieces rather than taking care both in the transitions into and out of ambient sections and in the ambient music itself. Some folks like Njiqahdda, Marblebog, and Coldworld make it all work together though.

While your first album was released by Starlight Temple Society, the second one was spread by Crucial Blast. How were you able to establish these contacts? Did they get in touch with you or did it happen vice versa?

I cold-called STS when I stumbled upon their site after I had enough Schrei aus Stein material completed to warrant sending out demos. Luckily they were into it! I met Adam from Crucial Blast at a noise/drone festival I played about ten years ago and he's released a couple of encomiast records, so when STS passed on Tsisnaasjini (it strayed a little bit too far off the black metal path for STS's taste) I got in touch with him straight-away. They're both solid labels and good folks.

How do you compose music in general? Do you start with a certain riff or motive or is it some kind of picture that you try to recreate through the music? Is it some special mood that you need to get into in order to craft it?

I often tend to begin with rhythmic ideas or particular chord progressions and build a skeletal version in the computer with a simple drum part to see if it works out. From there it's a long process of experimentation and adding and subtracting different elements until I feel like the whole piece has a good flow to it. The road is often pretty chaotic and the process isn't very efficient. In some cases I have conceptual ideas that I want to work out, but other times it runs more on instinct and trial-and-error. Either way, the end result often bears little resemblance to my original idea, but that's part of the fun. My hard drive is littered with failures as a result, though, and I have unfinished tracks that languish for months until I either figure out what to do with them or cast them to the rubbish heap.

You also have a side-project. Would you mind writing some lines on it? What is the difference to SaS and are there even some similarities?

I have several projects apart from Schrei aus Stein. As I mentioned above, encomiast is an ambient project that I've been working on for about 12 years and have had a decent amount of success with. Initially, when I started Schrei aus Stein, I thought I might just be making a really strange encomiast record! Those who know both projects can probably hear a lot of similarities in terms of the musical flow, and in some ways the compositional process is quite similar. My other current project is Burn Your World, a grindcore band in which I play bass and occasionally yell.

What music do you listen to generally? Are there some albums you would like to recommend?

I tend to listen to an awful lot of well-worn black metal classics, plus various obscurities I find largely through Aesop Dekker's Cosmic Hearses blog. The Black Twilight circle out on the west coast of the USA (Volahn, Ashdautas, Arizmenda, etc.) are putting out some great stuff currently.

Where can people buy your music? How can folks get in touch with you?

They can get it directly from me, or from either Starlight Temple Society or Crucialblast. Tsisnaasjini is available on iTunes along with most of the encomiast catalog. The best way to get in touch with me personally is to email ross at encomiast dot com. I do still go to Myspace sometimes to check messages and whatnot, but I don't trust that site to be around for very much longer.

Some final words if you like

Thanks for your interest! I've been pleasantly surprised and humbled by the nice response Schrei aus Stein has received. Hopefully the new material will turn out well! -RH

Review section

Sarah Weis – ><: Level 2

(USA; Experimental, Electronic)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (5:14)

<http://sarahweis.com/>, http://freemusicarchive.org/music/Sarah_Weis/

Still stuck at level one
The game had just begun
Never reaching number two?
An' no hope getting thru?

Strange
Free kind of beats, they flow
Experiments
And to analogue a bow
Snippets
And not much in the trough
Electronic
And not one metal beat.

Business
An instrumental and a start
Accusation
And soon to live apart?
Revisit
Could be a broken heart!
Fluidity
He ... she ... no art!
Alas and
Finally ... an alms for 'e feat

Sarah Weis, does she know?
Level 2?
Onward!
Let's go!

(*roaring and then thundering applause*)

[Please read the note in the introduction on this review]

Foreskin – B.I.T.P.

(Pakistan; Thrash Metal, Crossover)

6 Tracks (CD, Tape, MP3 – Self-released) - _ _ - (9:42)

<http://www.myspace.com/foreskinpakistan>

Well, after two rather short and rather humorous reviews in an earlier edition of this magazine (Number 9), this time the length and the complexity of the release prohibits something similar ... and to run the same joke twice would also be quite lame.

So there we are. This demo was recorded in two sessions and you can clearly recognize it through the two different sounds of the compositions; 1-3 and 4-6 respectively. Whether or not the nearly absence of those odd samples is a good thing is hard to say, because they add some sort of humorous undertone to the overall concept. The Omair Soomro Song has such a section in it, in case anyone cares.

Aside from this fast thrash metal is offered, which in style resembles the underground and 'we don't give a fuck attitude', so common to a lot of other bands from this genre. Nevertheless, the rather short length of the compositions leaves little room to actually explore the ideas; which in case of the opener is actually a good thing. Fast and merciless riff attacks with occasionally slower interludes are what can be found on this release. The mixture between screaming and singing adds a further nice nuance to the overall impression.

At least B.I.T.P. is better than what the band released earlier. The style of the genre was not invented anew and it would be interesting to have more length but also some nice solo parts in the compositions. Nevertheless, as this band comes from a rather small metal scene, you should give it a try.

Straziata Requite Delle Rovine – Everything Cold (2009)

(Italy; Ambient, Noise, Black Metal)

1 Track (Tape – Self-released; MP3 – Self-released, DNA Collective) - _ _ - (25:07)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/immagini/dnacollective/straz.html>,

<http://www.myspace.com/straziatarequiedellerovine>

The netlabel DNA Collective has made this track available for download, but only in a 128 kbps quality. Even though the Internet Archives entry (see below) of the release seems to indicate different types of qualities, it is actually not so and it always heads to the aforementioned bit rate.

'Straziata Requite Delle Rovine' have made some information available on how to segment the one long composition:

00:00 - 03:57 sogni infranti

03:57 - 08:59 oppression of my walls

08:59 - 21:38 empty rooms could tell a story

21:38 - 25:19 silently way of existence

(Source: <http://www.archive.org/details/EverythingCold>)

So this would be the way the whole piece is to be understood and the reason for combining them together is in order to preserve the atmosphere. Speaking of it, the listener will experience some rather raw as well as unbalanced piece of music here. The term 'metal' or 'black metal' should be not stressed

over excess because this facet plays a rather minor role, due to the production which has moved the guitars into the back, while the noisiness of the music tends to be quite dominant at times.



Each of the segments is presented with a short description:

Chaotic, this would give a clear indication on what to expect. Noisy guitars, strange keyboards and also some vocals can be found here.

The second track has more of a direction, but the ingredients have remained the same even though the keys have less impact here. Annoying in some respect is the production, which lead to some odd effects in the guitars. The 128 kbps-compression did most certainly not help in this respect. There might be some melodies at times, but they tend to be drowned by the noise.

And on it goes ... and would there not be the rattling of the snare, then the music would be tolerable. Moreover, some vague impressions even suggest that some nice ideas can be found in this part, but these generally vanish into obscurity ... or in the background and are unable to have any lasting impact.

Well, the end comes with some neo-classic influences, repetitive guitars motives and some odd vocal parts.

This release would be better would the sound quality reach for normal levels and the compression not be so low. Noisy black metal with various influences, whose parts are hard to make out.

In Zaire – In Zaire (live)

(Italy; Experimental)

1 Track (MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (18:40)

<http://www.myspace.com/inzaire>

As it is a live recording some amount of rawness and unbalances in the music can be expected. So, do not be surprised when the drums are generally too dominant and the guitars too much the background.

Nevertheless, let us ignore this aspect for a moment, even though it has an impact on how the music is perceived. The performance of the band combines various influences and is in itself quite fascinating. Chant-like vocals parts, tribal drum-sequences and at times a psychedelic atmosphere form a somewhat rare combination. One long track can be found on this recording and even though it is quite listenable, the real thing – the real live concert – will sound much more impressive I suspect.

It is hard to find words for what is going on here, so I leave it up to the listener to judge for him- or herself. There is no such thing as a melody line, because to experiment seems to be a core element for the band.

Dead Black Arms – Slow Burning Ocean (2010)

(Denmark; Drone/Doom)

1 Track (MP3 – Netlabel: Drowning) -_-_- (31:56)

<http://drowning.cc/drown05/>, <http://www.myspace.com/satanismaroundhollywood>

Monotonous. Minimalist. Droning. Dead Black Arms' release opens the thirty-two minute track Slow Burning Ocean with a slow build-up of droning guitar noises. A dense layer is created in the background, while some sort of an oscillating humming noise lingers around somewhere, too. On and on it goes. Endlessly. Mercilessly. Slowly burns the oceans. Slowly the life is asphyxiated. Slowly the water brought to a boiling temperature. And with each passed second, glimpses of something new, something different can be discovered in the music.

The sound of the guitars becomes more intense. The droning reaches for an increase in the noise level. In some respect it would be fair to state that the music has a good sense of hypnotic atmosphere, which tries to lure the listener away and into this world of minimal noises. At some point vague glimpses of drums increase a certain pattern of cymbals and snares, while the aforementioned facets continue with their play. The more the end of the track draws nigh, the more the level of noise increases. The more the drums and guitars can be felt. Has the track a grand finale? An eruption of monumental proportions?

No.

The only 'remarkable' aspect would be a certain jump in the level of noise of the drums some minutes before the track closes. It is this moment in which everything else is drowned and only this instrument appears. It sounds random and comes quite surprising, because it does not really seem to fit with what the band performed earlier. In case similar ones would have appeared earlier the listener would have been able to follow the band in their attempt. As such is not the case the end sounds a bit unconvincing and maybe even desperate, due to the way the tension is dissolved. So, after a long period of patiently waiting and eager listener, some sort of a bitter taste remains.

Arkodaemik – Hell Fires

(Canada; Black Metal)

6 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (33:20)

<http://www.myspace.com/arkodaemik>

In the eighth edition of this magazine the Canadian band Ov Hollowness was presented in an interview / review section. There some hints on a new side-project were given and only a week weeks later Arkodaemik's first release already saw the light of day. Similarly to the former project also the latter one distributes their music via a free download. So, one aspect should be made clear from the beginning: for the moment the Hell Fires is available from the band's websites.

What about the music, then? Well, in case someone is familiar with Ov Hollowness, this latest instalment by Mark R. and as outlined in the interview (edition eight) the overall style here is much faster and aggressive. Dark Funeral – especially the track ‘Eleven’ – as well as Dissection can be named as two prime influences in terms of the album. Despite some calmer and ‘atmospheric’ moments – Hell Fires – Arkodaemik’s art is more oriented on the guitars and comes as such with much more heaviness.

There is actually not much to complain about as the compositions are well written, catchy, rarely monotonous or even boring and someone with a fancy of more fast and a bit aggressive black metal might have a good time listening to Hell Fires. Nevertheless, one aspect that hangs a bit like a burden over this release is the general absence of something really new and fresh. An interesting performance that lacks a bit of innovation.

Sick to the Back Teeth – Full-Body Heartache

(USA; Drone Doom Metal, Noise, Ambient)

1 Track (MP3 – Netlabel: Drowning) - _ _ - (29:41)

<http://www.sicktothebackteeth.com/>; <http://www.myspace.com/sicktothebackteeth>, <http://drowning.cc/>

The first impression of the band’s stylistic approach came to me via the split release with Gnaw Their Tongues. Looking back, it was an ambiguous and by no means convincing performance; neither was the one of the Dutch band but this would be a different topic.

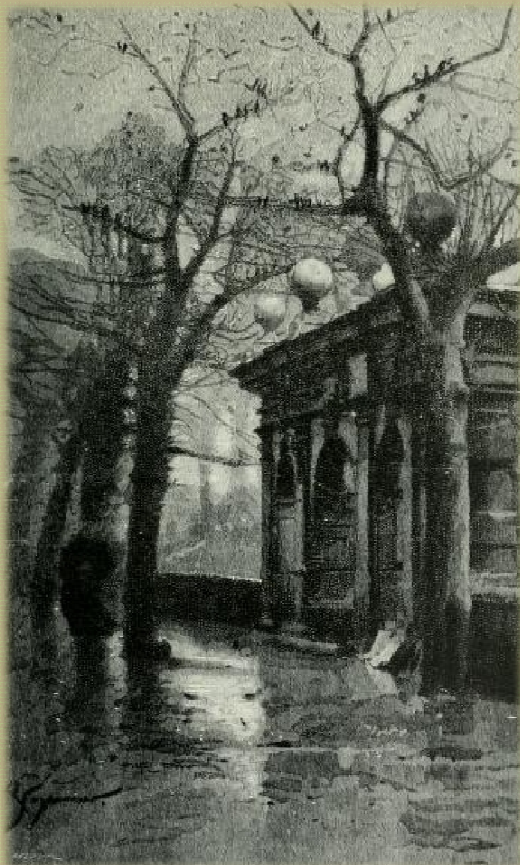
Full Body Heartache comes with a monotonous drone doom metal track, whose nearly thirty minutes present the listener a rather minimalist composition. Over the whole length little variation can be found and the one motive keeps getting repeated in one way or another. Some amount of additional manipulation appears and this is what makes the whole composition palatable; despite what was mentioned before.

Noise plays a crucial role here. It appears not only in the distortion of the guitar, but also in the form of additional layers and manipulations. So, while the guitars continue with their repetitive style, in the background a mixture between ambient drone and noise creates some sort of a counterpoint to the

minimalism in the composition. It is there that the variation and the experimentation have its source and it is there that the momentum to move the guitars in a different direction begins. The longer this track takes, the more this facet takes over control and drowns the guitars.

Towards the end nothing of the motives has remained and it is replaced by some sort of minimalist droning sound. Fragments of noise appear again and again, and it gives the impression as if what had been performed earlier tries to re-enter the scenery but at the end is unable to. On and on the texture goes and only towards the last minutes the noise is able to break the dominance. Some vocals and a melody enter, accompanied or better said distorted by aggressive noises. The beauty is destroyed and becomes a farce.

Silently everything closes ... and the listener is able to catch some breath.



Venomous – No Return

(Sweden; old-school Black Metal)

7 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_- (33:46)

<http://www.myspace.com/blackvenomous>

Is Quorthon still alive? Has he ventured back some years and released something of his first outputs again? Or were some of his compositions not spread before and have therefore only seen the light of day on this recording for the very first time? Well, the direction of the music as well as the overall concept should be obvious by now. Venomous – another reference as well as reverence – play a kind of black metal that in style sounds so very different from what the majority is performing at the moment.

Not only the sound also the song-writing as well as the lyrics take the listener back into the early days of the black metal scene. Too much cliché? Absolutely not! The b/w cover artwork with the goat on it, the primitive sound, the nice bass-guitar in the background as well as this dark sound works together in a somewhat fascinating way. Moreover, the rather hollow vocals – a mixture between singing, speaking and croaking – give the impression of being mandatory in case you want to create art of the early days of the scene. Maybe the production should have been slightly less 'polished' in order to be even more 'convincing'. Venomous' sound is raw, but has a lot of power in the drums; which is pretty cool and adds a nice touch to the music. Nevertheless, the tracks are exceedingly catchy and anti-modern. Well, a general focus on slightly upper midtempo black metal sets the right pace and the Swedish band was actually able to craft a piece of dark art whose concept does not sound too 'planned' or controlled. The vibe is there and it is possible to enjoy the tracks; thanks also to the lyrics, whose typical content can be understood easily.

A venture into another realm would be the last track. This would be a 'homage' to Mr. "I have recently been released from prison and am now able to release no more crappy ambient stuff" Vikernes, which seems to put a considerable share of the black metal community into a frenzy. Well, I will not comment on this issue, because in case I would, I would certainly have to face a lawsuit for slander, then. The fascination for him tells you a lot about the current state of the black metal scene ... sadly. Nevertheless, a



discussion of this last track is unavoidable. The music has some touch of Burzum's Filosofem album and also the screams show some resemblance. Along with an icy atmosphere and a rather repetitive approach in terms of the riffs, Venomous is able to create some of the atmosphere of their Norwegian 'archetype'. Compared with their other tracks the music is more intense, harsh and aggressive.

No Return? The title of the albums sounds like an ironic take on what the band actually offers to the listener. From a different perspective though, it seems like the only way to actually deal with the legacy of the early days of the black metal scene. Bathory's The Return... is a reference impossible to ignore, another one would be Venom; but when it comes to their art then the gap is wider compared to Quorthon's band. The target audience for Venomous is rather limited, but those who refuse to follow modern trends and have a heart for this old-school influenced concept might find the music offered on 'No Return' quite charming.

Formless – Organic Chaos

(Poland; Death Metal, Funk)

6 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_- - (32:08)

<http://www.myspace.com/formlesspolska>

The story on how I was able to acquire this release is similar to the one of Brand and as such it is not necessary to repeat it. Yet, there are some problems. Unlike the Swedish band, this one from Poland is less able to find a clear spot on my metal map and has as such played a rather minor role over the months since I received the CD. Death metal is able to fascinate me, but on a smaller degree than black metal for instance. Nevertheless, a free release should always be granted with some feedback and ... there we go.

The title of the release – Organic Chaos – foreshadows in some respect the intentions of the band. Chaos ... but controlled and focused. As such, the main focus on death metal has shifted a bit towards other influences. There is a bit of vinyl scratching, calm and melodic vocal parts, a bit of riff-chugging and so on and so forth. In case someone wants to listen to the pure formula, then this piece of music might be one to avoid.

Interestingly, Formless were actually able to create a combination whose elements work together nicely. The tracks are generally quite heavy, have a lot of drive and were also good produced. Those unrelated influences do not sound alien or artificial, but rather as something that makes sense in the way they were added. Being their second release in eleven years – another similarity with the Swedish band Brand – Formless' art should certainly be able to find an audience amongst those death metal fans, whose focus is not limited to this one genre only.

Thaw – Decay

(Poland; Black Metal, Noise, Ambient)

8 Tracks (CD – Self-released) -_- - (39:35)

<http://www.myspace.com/thawnoise>, <http://thaw.bandcamp.com/>

Those who have followed this magazine over the time will notice that a certain emphasis was put on black metal that tries to move outside the ordinary and rather dull (*insert band name*) routine. Bands like Rotorvator and Demetrius Grave are two examples for trying to step outside of what has been done to death. Thaw, a young project from Poland, seems to pursue this path as well and their first output Decay combines black metal with a good amount of distortion and noise; ambient facets can also be found, but their impact is on a smaller scale.

Somewhat like Gnaw Their Tongues meets Satyricon, this might be something to pinpoint 'Decay' in order to describe it succinctly. The music comes with some surprisingly catchy moments and has less focus on being experimental and therefore of a 'free' style. Calmer segments work rather as transitions between the compositions and not in the sense of increasing the overall complexity of the song-writing. As such, the tracks are rather linear, violent, noisy and aggressive. Well, not an optimal balancing, but Thaw was able to combine these in a meaningful way. At least the compositions have some amount of varying in terms of the tempo.



GTT have crafted several black metal-inspired releases – for instance: 'Dawn Breaks Open Like a Wound That Bleeds Afresh' – and Thaw would not be far away from this. Sadly – really? – there are no samples of any sort on this output, hence the focus is rather on the extreme kind of music offered here. 'Decay' was an ample choice for this recording, because it reflects very neatly the nastiness which can be felt throughout the entire release. No salvation, no relieve and nothing charming. Thaw

sound like the foreshadowing of some pure evil being which attempts to drown the world with an ancient plague even before it was unleashed.

Nevertheless, a more daring attempt, a more willingness to experiment, could make this music even more interesting. Even though the band avoids a too monotonous or minimalist attempt, there is still some aspect that long for an improvement in quality; the drums for instance. Some references had been presented in this review and fans of these bands might want to give Thaw a try.

Note:

You can either download this release from Bandcamp – comes with an additional track [a rather minimalist dark ambient one] – or buy the CD from the band ... not sure whether it is still available.

ktmROCKS e-mag issue 08, March 2011

(Origin: Nepal)

(Homepage: <http://ktmrocks.com/>)

(Link: http://www.ktmrocks.com/emag/ktmROCKS_Emag_issue08.pdf; Size: ~ 6 MB)

I know this label, because once you dig around in the Internet, one of the things you like to discover are small bands from tiny scenes; Nepal is one of these. An 'obvious' and premature image, drawn from bands of other rather neglected scenes, in respect to the musical performance and the production is misleading, because a band like Antim Graham is actually able to prove what kind of music can be crafted in this desolate spot outside of the main focus of the metal scene. Also this magazine looks rather professional ... and not done in an hour or two.

The latest instalment of the ktmROCKS e-mag is separated into four categories:

- ➔ Features bands
Short presentation of a band
- ➔ Interviews
Generally quite extensive with a focus on Asian and locals bands, with some exceptions.
- ➔ Album reviews
Play a rather small role here and the three column design makes it difficult to read them.
- ➔ Gear Talk
Nomen est omen. Not very common but rather something for musicians.

Aside from this, a download section of several releases from local – I was too lazy to check them all – can be found, some words from fans were added and the whole magazine is basically loaded with some great shots of bands. Actually, the design of this magazine is splendid – except for this three-column thing. While the general colourization is black and white, those pictures work as a contrast to it. Those 103 (!!!) pages are quite an interesting reading and provide an insight into a region of which it is hard to get much information here. I can only encourage you to get a hold of it and download it asap. Printing might prove to be difficult ... and you will understand why once you have opened the pdf file. Really recommended!

Apolhocaust – Apolhocaust

(Italy; Death Metal, Grindcore, Black Metal)

6 Tracks (CD – Forbidden Music) -_- (27:10)

<http://www.myspace.com/apolhocaust>, forbiddenmusic@hotmail.it

Sick ... sick ... sick... this is what comes to mind while listening to the first bastard thrown unto the Earth by the Italian band Apolhocaust. Deep growls meet death metal riffs, whose style meanders between and calm and a violently aggressive one. In 'Agony' – the longest track – the band really wants you to feel the pain and they therefore took the tempo down to really slow levels; which increased the overall heaviness of the music considerably. Imagine a doom/death track with some gurgling vocals on top of it and you can at least some impression of what to expect.

What about the rest then? Rather old-school inspired death metal in vein of Grave and/or Carnage but generally more minimalist in the riff arrangements and with a difference in the vocals of course. The music does not have characteristic guitar motives and complexity of an old-school death metal band output. Apolhocaust lacks this aspect and the compositions have a narrower focus on the riffs, which

means that the complexity is somewhat limited. An argument against the band? Hm ... it depends on how you perceive the music. Those Italians make actually a good job here and the six tracks have a good amount of catchiness, drive and consistency. Blasts were mixed with slower passages, while each of the compositions has a different setting of these.

Even though this release is not entirely convincing – there are some slightly boring or plain parts in the compositions; especially those in which the repetition becomes tedious in some respect –, it is still fun to listen to. Maybe a bit more variation in the vocals would be neat, because this reduction to the ‘deep growling’ sounds a bit too forced and artificial. Solos would also be a ‘nice to have’ and also the drums could use some additional motives. Nevertheless, the band made quite a lot out of what seems to be at their disposal while composing this release. Graven flaws are absent and as such it is actually quite good to listen to ... no, the genre was not re-invented here ... you cannot have everything.

Mitochondrion – Parasignosis

(Canada; Death Metal)

11 Tracks (CD – Profound Lore) - _ _ - (55:45)

<http://www.myspace.com/mitochondrion>, <http://mitochondrion.ca/>

It is possible to request reviews from me... and this one would be an example for it.

The first impression was the following: ‘Musik zum abgewöhnen’(*), this would be a German phrase appropriate for describing how I feel while listening to the latest instalment of the Canadian death metal band Mitochondrion. The reasons for this are a combination of the rather dull and boring vocals along with a song-writing that seems to move nowhere at times; Tetravirulence (Pestilentiam Intus Vocamus, Voluntatem Absolvimus Part III) was such a strain that I had to look at the player several times in the vain hope to see or hear it finally end. When it comes to the vocals a fan would also be able to do the job. Just add some loose metal parts and let it create a certain amount of noises and ... there you go ... you have some strange noisy background stuff. Then at least it would be possible to shut the thing off, because the two vocalists give the impression of attempting to recite the entire Encyclopaedia Britannica. Guess how well that went.

At least ... yes, at least, the instruments do a good job and throw out some really cool riffs; Banishment (Undecaphosphoric) and Trials for instance. If you ever thought that Trey from Morbid Angel is the sole person in the death metal scene with the capability of composing and actually playing some sick riffs, then these three Canadians prove the contrary. Furious, chaotic – in a positive sense – and quite heavy death metal with a considerable amount of breaks is what the listener will find on Parasignosis. It is really something like a storm that is unleashed on this recording and from the mere point of the instruments nothing but praises can be given to the bands. The compositions are tight, aggressive and have loads of power.

Nevertheless, Mitochondrion’s style du jour leaves the listener rather bewildered about what the intentions behind this release actually are. On the one hand there is quite top-notch death metal – chaotic, wild, furious –, while the vocals are an endless pointless barrage of growling whose only positive aspect is that they do not appear over the entire length of Parasignosis; there are some seconds without them. The title of the release seems to be an amalgam of two words: parasite and gnosis. And it is funny how it all falls back on it. Like a festering wound this alien inside Mitochondrion’s body simply takes away too much energy from the actually fascinating art. As such, their latest instalment is nothing but a contradiction that became flesh.

(*) Well, this phrase is difficult to translate. The ‘easiest or first’ translation is misleading, because it lacks the inherent sarcasm and bitterness of the term. Dict.leo suggests the following: to be a turn off. Not perfect, but it points in the right direction.

Note:

I had a lengthy discussion at the Metal Archives forum on the issue of the hidden ambient tracks that are there but which the band does not consider as part of the art ... something like that... so, they are not there or are they? Should they be discussed or not? But as the band does not see them as a part of the release – why are they there? – it is not necessary to dig into them...

Backyard Ghost – The Lady or the Tiger

(USA; Dark Ambient)

8 Tracks (MP3 – Ambientaria Records) - _ _ - (55:21)

<https://ambientariarecords.wordpress.com/>,

<http://www.backyardghost.com/>,

<http://www.myspace.com/backyardghost>

In case someone was wondering what the title of the release refers to, a short glance over the website of the label can help to clear matters up. Actually, the dichotomy makes quite a lot of sense because it is a trap we generally all fall for; sometimes willingly, sometimes by chance. How this plays into the album and the music seems to be difficult to comprehend, because the ambient and generally 'instrumental' nature makes it difficult to transfer a message to the listener.

'The Lady or the Tiger' has some samples, but judging from the way they appear and the share that these would take, they seem to play a rather minor role in the concept of Backyard Ghost. Dominating are other aspects and these create the impression of a somehow surreal world; a place outside of your normal realm, a region in which merely the spirits and ghosts are allowed to enter. Oscillating textures, vaguely discernable textures in the background, calm and 'warm' ones in the front and a great variety of noises make up the art of this American band. Some tracks even have some electronic beat, which helps to break the 'monotony' of the music a bit. Being generally 'inoffensive', it is easy to follow the band without getting too much distracted.

There is an extraordinary density in the compositions and the band is really able to provide the listener with a variety of well crafted compositions. Some of them have a slight industrial touch and through it the music received an additional push into the realm in which the art becomes surreal. The Lady or the Tiger does not sound overloaded or too sterile. When there are two aspects that I would have to criticize, then it is the absence of 'real' instruments – as a counterpoint – and the rather small role of the samples.

This is a good release, whose content combines complexity as well as intensity and attempts to unfold before the eyes of the listener an otherworld scenario.

Note:

I generally prefer to listen to the music via headphones and as this release comes with a lot of layers as well as a variety of styles and sounds, it might be best do so.



Dark Meadows Production section

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/>

Pink Venom – Waste of the World

(UK; Drone, Ambient)

6 Tracks (CD – Dark Meadows Recording) - _ _ - (50:03)

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/pinkvenom.htm>, <http://www.myspace.com/pinkvenom1>

How am I supposed to open this review? Pink Venom sounds actually a bit weird and the title of the release does certainly not help to improve matters. Waste of the World might be interpreted as ironic in a weird and odd kind of way, but to put it into a context with the music is by no means easy. Furthermore, the band comes with some strange track length on this recording. While some compositions are over seventeen, others do not even break the three minutes barrier.

So, while the longer compositions come in a monotonous and rather minimalist drone/ambient style (guitar reverb + additional layers), the other ones have a larger focus on the ambient side. This means, once you have reached half – speaking in the amount of tracks and not the length – of the album, then you will recognize a strange shift in the concept. Of the moaning like music nothing is left and the atmosphere shifts towards something more cheerful and with more facets.

A rather dark opening and something completely different towards the end, this would succinctly summarise the impressions gained from listening to this album. In terms of which part can be enjoyed most, then the emphasis lies most certainly on the first segment of it. Not only is the atmosphere more intense, it is also of a kind that is actually able to grab the attention of the listener, while the second part of Waste of the World lets loose much too early.

The recommendation would be:

Listen to the first three tracks and scrape the last three.

The Elapidae Project – Proxenus / Glowingpixie

(UK; Ambient, Drone)

1 Track (CD – Dark Meadow Recordings) - _ _ - (28:49)

<http://www.myspace.com/elapidaeproject>, <http://www.myspace.com/glowingpixie>,

The Elapidae Project is something that needs some explanation before the actual music can be discussed. Those who have a chance to actually own a copy the matter is laid out in the 'booklet'. Nevertheless, with only eighty copies in print and no chance to download the music at the moment, it might be best to present everything with some hints on the background.

Proxenus / Glowingpixie is a title which contains some amount of useful information. Here, a reference to the two bands in question is presented: Proxenus the original creator of the drone texture and Glowingpixie the band, whose interpretation can be listened to on this output. As such, it reminds a bit on the Constant series and in case someone is interested on how this turned out, the Internet Archive is the one place or site to turn to.

Anyway, the music is generally quite minimalist and has a strong focus on the drone texture, whose part is nearly completely present over the entire length. There is rain, there are some noise effects and there are various layers in the arrangements. Actually, the composition itself reminds a bit on the Constant series (see the Internet Archive), due to the minimalist nature of the recording as well as the way the 'effects' or sounds were placed here. A difference would be the way the music progresses. As the aforementioned series suggests, a certain predictability and steadiness is a vital element in the art; while the interpretation done by Glowingpixie 'increases' in intensity over the length. As such, a rather calm opening continues to evolve, while noise samples help to distort the monotonous atmosphere.

You need to have a certain mood in order to appreciate what is going on here. "The Elapidae Project" seems to be rather something for those whose fancies lie outside the normal realm of music and who enjoy examining long compositions in detail. Once more artists have created their interpretation of

Proxenus' track it might be interesting to examine all of them and analyse the differences as well as the similarities. A track alone is something that gives the impression of being lost and ripped out of the broader concept.

Note:

An overview over the status of the remix project as well as the bands involved in it can be found on the designated MySpace site; first link. Nevertheless, it would have been neat to have an actual link or download of the original track.

Ghoul Detail – Medicated

(UK; Drone, Industrial, Ambient, Noise)

10 Tracks (CD – Dark Meadow Recordings) - _ - _ - (71:05)

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/ghouldetail.htm>, <http://www.myspace.com/ghouldetail>

A short glance over the discography reveals that the person behind this band is anything but lazy. Since its foundation in 2003/4 a considerable amount of albums have seen the light of day and this one spread under the banner of the British label Dark Meadow Recordings is only one in a larger series.

Let us begin the discussion of the music with a quote:

Medicate my way to enlightenment

(Taken from the booklet)

The imperative seems to be that to take drugs in order to achieve the full enlightenment ... or at least to forget about the mess this world is drowning in. Do you feel pain, is there an aching somewhere in your body, then take some medicine and be sure to take enough ... and regularly. Today's world is full of narcotics and drugs. Maybe we are not only 'Amusing Ourselves to Death' (see Neil Postman); maybe we 'drug ourselves to death as well. Anyway, at least there is a chance that we die laughing; did anyone understand this reference?

Well, this music has not a sedative effect on the listener, because it is rather some hasty chaotic mess of it. Violent and a subliminal martial tendency can be discovered throughout the release. The genre description provided above gives some indication on what to expect. In varying degrees it is possible to identify these facets throughout the release. Calmness, like some people might refer to when it comes to ambient, seems to be something rather absent on 'Medicated'. Surreal soundspheres is what the listener has to go through and these were generally mixed with industrial noises or intense drone textures. Ghoul Detail stick to this over the whole course of the album, but switches the intensity as well as the arrangements.

'Interferon' is quite noisy, compared with the band's standard on this release, while 'Valium Sanctuary' is rather 'inoffensive' and has a larger focus on the drone textures; to name two 'extremes'. Well, the titles give at least some indication on what to expect. In some way surprising are the drums – with a nice and catchy beat – in the Septic Spectre track, because they do not appear anywhere else on this album.

The differences between the tracks are rather marginal, but the quality is actually not bad. A bit more variation would have been neat, but those ten compositions are quite listenable.

How the music is perceived in a medicated state lies beyond the knowledge of the reviewer, though.

Syrinx / Playing with Nuns

Here we have a split release between the British band Syrinx and the Argentinean based Playing with Nuns.

Syrinx – Sheltered by Nuns

(UK; Ambient)

1 Track ~_~ (14:35)

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/syrinx.htm>, <http://www.myspace.com/syrinxdrone>

Well, the first part of this split album is a rather calm, dreamy and laid back ambient track. It is one of those that can basically move on forever. After a rather minimalist start, some sort of guitar melody or better said textures joins in, while towards the end some saxophone-inspired sound texture makes an appearance. The entire track progresses in a nice and really inoffensive way. Extreme facets cannot be found, bloated moments are also absent and the listener can therefore sit back and let some sedative ambient pass by. Nothing new but good for a spin or two.

Playing with Nuns – Talking to the Panic Room

(Argentina; Ambient, noise, drone)

1 Track ~_~ (14:34)

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/playingwithnuns.htm>,
<http://www.myspace.com/playingwithnuns>

Take a look at the band's discography and you will see tons and tons of releases. This one is not too far from what was described above. Again, the music has a focus on a very calm ambient texture in the background – here: even more minimalist – while noise/industrial effects add some sort of distractive elements. Nothing more to say, except maybe that this track has a slightly disturbing undertone, due to the elements used in creating it, but this is the only aspect to point towards.

To sum the impressions up:

Nothing too impressive here. Rather standard ambient interpretations.

Folk Section

Alter Etno – Savon Voda

(Poland; Folk, acoustic)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (10:25)

http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/ALTER_ETNO; <http://www.myspace.com/alteretno>

And now for something completely different (Imagine a huge explosion and some clouds rising up). Alter Etno are a young folk band from Warszawa, Poland. Three tracks appear on their first demo (?) output and even though this might sound not much, each of the compositions is different and has its own fascination.

Alright, the opener is a bit too cliché-loaded, but once you leave this aspect aside and enjoy the splendid variations in the tunes, this charming atmosphere of the music as well as the well composed melodies, then you will definitely have a good time. Flutes (really nice), drums, some electronic elements, a violin, a cello (played like a bass guitar at times) and some female vocals ... these facets can be found on this recording.

Tua nai e meiga has some nice as well as catchy vocal parts, while 55 Krokow has some cool arrangements. Aside from this, the former has more of a dynamic, while the latter – as an instrumental – lacks the impact of the voice and is therefore more 'thoughtful' and 'demure'; this is compensated by

the song-writing in some respect. There is one thing I would criticize: the English lyrics sound strange at times ... especially in the first part of Fairytale.

Note:

You can currently download their release at Jamendo ... which you should do.

Foxpockets – The Coracle & The Albatross (2011)

(UK; Folk, Acoustic, Experimental)

7 Tracks (CD – Reverbworship) - - - (25:22)

<http://www.myspace.com/foxpockets>

Funny how some releases end up in my collection. Foxpockets, a young British folk band, contacted me via MySpace and requested a review. Well, nothing too surprising actually, would it not be for the genre this band plays. Ambient, drone and noise, even grindcore hits my shores now and then, but to get in touch with someone from the folk realm is a rather rare event ... extremely rare ... actually, this was the first time and I was not only sceptical about but also hesitant in accepting the request.



The musicians behind Foxpockets have been active together in one way or another over the years in various line-ups and in the summer of 2010 the band was actually formed. According to a flyer the live performance is 'part medieval procession, part ethereal enchantment'. Something like Blackmore's Night then? No, even though the general spirit in the music shows some resemblance, the style of this quartet moves into a different direction. Here, no fluffy and sing-along music is presented. A certain earnestness and heaviness runs through all of the tracks, takes away the sweet vibe of the (female) vocals and turns it around. 'The Coracle & The Albatross' is not something to dance to, not something to lift the spirit, but it may be good to kill the atmosphere in a cheerful afternoon barbeque party.

Four persons and a lot of instruments: harp, penny whistle, accordion, glockenspiel, banjo and some additional percussion. Judging from the complexity of the music, on a live set they must surely be quite busy in order to re-create their art. According to the flyer which came with the CD, also field-recordings are also part of the band's oeuvre, but the compositions on 'The Coracle &

The Albatross' seem to lack this effect; if I am not utterly mistaken. Anyway, over the course of several days it was this ep that kept spinning and spinning. Furthermore, some fragments of the lyrics seem to stick in my head: ... as they powder their noses over the sink ... from 'The Nautical Song'; the CD does not have a lyric-sheet and I was too lazy to ask for it.

One aspect needs to be criticized: the balance of the instruments and vocals respectively. Even though the overall production is good, at times the latter aspect has some problems in competing with the former. It even reaches the point in which it can bother the listener, because the music gives the impression of loosing its focus. Aside from this not much can be pointed towards as 'bothering'. Well crafted compositions with disturbingly strange lyrics and interesting arrangements are what make up the performance on Foxpockets' first ep. Some tracks can be found in their MySpace profile and in case you want to lay hands on their CD, you should better be quick because only eighty handmade copies exist of it.

Mission Melpa – Mission Melpa demo

(Sweden; Traditional Folk)

3 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_- - (11:57)

<http://missionmelpa.bandcamp.com/>

Well ... as two folk bands already made it into this issue, why not include a third one? Because now you can take a map of Europe and draw a triangle by connecting the countries each of them calls their home. You like triangles, don't you? Don't even dare to disagree!

Mission Melpa – whatever this name refers to – is a pretty young band from Sweden and their first demo has hit the street or the Internet only very recently; mid February to be true. Their music is a contrast to what has been covered in this magazine so far. Conservative ... maybe ... but certainly very traditional and is a term appropriate for describing their art. No fancy electronic elements, no outré instruments or rhythms and no ambient elements.

Guitar + violin + vocals ... three persons and three duties, it is so 'commonplace' that it actually should hurt. Yet with their music whose style can be placed somewhere in between what Triakel and early Garmarna perform, they are able to create a certain amount of fascination. Being neither overtly cheering, nor too dark and depressing, the three tracks have a nice 'go along'. The charming voice of ??? – yes, no names are anything are presented on their bandcamp page – is actually surprisingly good – the last track Vallpigan with its vocal opening clearly reveals the qualities as well as the similarities with Emma Hårdelin –, while the two other member play a great supporting role. The sweet track Picka på korken presumably has some of the ironic undertone in it, which is quite characteristic for Scandinavian folk; listen to the Swedish band 'Två fisk och en fläsk' for instance.

Alright ... the demo **is** actually pretty good, but it has one flaw: a lack of identity. Whether you will be able to look beyond it is up to you, reader, but I am really curious how the next demo will sound.

Slow Death Records section

Ghost – Procession (2011)

(France; Noise)

4 Tracks (CDr – Slow Death Records) -_- - (79:04)

<http://slowdeathrecords.blogspot.com/>

Is this still music you can actually listen to or does Ghost venture into a realm in which it becomes an endurance to even make it through one spin. Procession, if you attempt to create a metaphor of it, would either be an extreme noise on the TV screen – which makes it impossible to see anything of the pictures – or in case you visit the cortege, something too horrible or terrifying that you would drop to the ground and barely risk an eye. You might perceive vague glimpses, but definitely nothing more.

Whether you take the first, the second, the third or even the fourth track makes little difference here. This band really takes the cake. A dense and impenetrable wall surrounds every tiny bit and piece of this record. A controlled chaos, a maelstrom of disgust that pours out of the speaker from the first to the last second. Offensive, harsh, aggressive noise this is what everyone will have to endure on this album. Mercy? ... not here!



In case you need an album to get rid of unfriendly or unwanted visitors, THIS IS THE RIGHT ONE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sold out already??? Damn ... a lot of people seem to be in dire need of stirring some chaos.

An interview on the band and the label can be found here:

http://www.musiquemachine.com/articles/articles_template.php?id=220

Younx Grounioc'h – Horror Woods (2011)

(France; Noise)

3 Tracks (CDr – Slow Death Records) -_-_- (70:51)

<http://slowdeathrecords.blogspot.com/>,

youngrounioc'h@ymail.com,

<http://www.myspace.com/557353897>

Whatever this band name refers to it does definitely not sound good... at least judging from the music. Compared with the Ghost release discussed above, this one ventures into more chaotic and extreme realms. In terms of the level of being offensive, this one reaches for higher levels, because the noise does not appear here as a wall-like texture, but rather in a constant re-interpreting and reshaping of the form. Now and then you can read the following, "Noise is beautiful" and Horror Woods might help you understand this sentiment. Despite the generally limited attempt, it is the way you can react to this type of art, how it influences you and shapes your perception that makes it all so interesting.

Even though there are nothing but three tracks, these are able to compensate this through intensity. The style is that of a wall of noise whose general monotony is disturbed by various types of manipulations. Blood Crowned Maniac would have the longest sections of these, while in the other ones something like short snippets or fragments tend to appear. Buzzing, screeching, fussing and what not can be found here. Again, the noise is quite minimalist and might rather appeal to the 'freak' than the jouisseur.

A more personal comment:

Holy fucking shit ... this is so 'annoying' that it pleases me beyond expression. Really, insert the CD in a player, plug-in some headphones, turn up the volume to an adequate level (tolerable, not excessive) and press play. I can guarantee you that the world will fade into somewhere far away and you can finally enjoy the peace of not having to recognize it anymore... and once the noise ends ... the silence becomes strange and otherworldly.

Again ... in case you want to scare people away ... this band provides with the proper 'tools'.

Also: sold out already.



The something else section

Caldera Lakes – Caldera Lakes

(USA; Ambient, Noise, Experimental)

3 Tracks (Tape – Sound of a dead Universe) -_-_- (29:54)

<http://calderalakes.com/>, http://freemusicarchive.org/music/Caldera_Lakes/,

<http://soundofadeaduniverse.blogspot.com/>

To sum the music up in a few words a tricky task indeed. On the one hand you have the fragility of the voices of the two women who are behind this band, on the other there are these rare eruptions into violent noise and both facets work together nicely. At their Free Music Archive entry you can get a glimpse of their art, even though the album offered there appears in a rough mix; Arctic Ghost is really recommended nonetheless.

Their tape – available at ‘Sound of a Dead Universe’ is not only beautifully crafted – I really would like to see more black metal tapes of this design quality – but also the music is quite fascinating. Even though the opener has a dreamy otherworldly atmosphere, the second one has these intense guitar distortions with vocals on top of it which together create this strange listening experience. Even more different is the last composition. With the sound of a ‘glockenspiel’ (?) or the sort, Caldera Lakes’ music receives some sort of ritualistic and trance-like touch; on top of it a variety of sound manipulations can be found.

The music of this American band did not leave my music player very often in the last few weeks and I have my doubts whether this will change anytime soon. Judging from the entry at Discogs, several releases have seen the light of day already, but none of them seem to be available right now. As such, you better hurry and get your copy from ‘Sound of a Dead Universe’ while you can.

Phrenia – Phrenia

(Japan; J-Rock, Metal, Pop)

5 Tracks (MP3 – Self-released) -_-_- (21:15)

<http://www.jamendo.com/de/artist/Phrenia>, <http://phrenia.jp/>

No, this review does not appear here because of the tragic events that hit Japan only recently. In fact, I know this band for some months already and always wanted to write about their music. They have uploaded a version of their album at Jamendo, which is available for free, while the ‘full’ one – with additional tracks – has been made available for purchase.

The music complies with the clichés someone from the West can have about Japanese music: keyboards, atmosphere and also the song-writing have this strange vibe, which is so common in the J-rock branch. Nevertheless, the voice of 色鈴 adds a sweet and wonderful touch to the performance of the band. Feel-good music, this is how Phrenia’s can be summarized ... the exotic touch should not be neglected here of course. Often melodic, sometimes even pushing forward, but it always reminds on a friend that gives you a big hug.

Music with a positive vibe, disgustingly ear-catchy melodies, focused on ‘radio-friendliness’, a really good vocalist and some metal guitars can be found on this rather short release; speaking of the ‘free’ version. Should you ever need music to help you make the day, help to lift your spirit up or something similar, then this band from Japan might provide the proper music for this.



Advertisements

Reality Impaired Records

(USA)

realityimpairedrec (at) yahoo (dot) com

a label for noise, ambient, metal and such. Pretty weird shit at times, but Stan has some great pieces in his distro

Skull Fucking Metal

(Canada)

<http://skullfuckingmetal.blogspot.com/>

similar to RIR, but even sicker and more stranger. Tons and tons of crazy stuff in the distro

Dokuro

(Italy)

<http://dokuro.it/>

focus is rather on experimental music: ambient and noise in a variety of facets. Releases are quite limited

Dark Meadow Recordings

(United Kingdom)

<http://www.darkmeadowrecordings.com/>

CDs and free downloads, such can be found on the label's homepage. It is a rather young one. The music ranges from noise, over ambient, over experimental over drone over metal.

Sylvan Realm

(USA – Black Metal)

<http://www.myspace.com/thetrueverie>

Their first CD is just out ... previously known as Reverie.

Methadol

(France – Hard Rock / Heavy Metal)

<http://www.myspace.com/methadol>

Their second release was spread not very long ago ... get it. Interview in the 11th edition of the magazine.

Kosmokrater

(USA – Old-school and underground black metal)

<http://www.myspace.com/kosmokratermusic>

Sick shit ... check out their MySpace site. A new Astrum release is also forthcoming (more professional old-school/punk black metal project)

Artilleria Pesada

(Andorra)

<http://a-pesada.blogspot.com/>

Noise, grindcore, ambient and a lot of extreme stuff ... such is offered by this label. You should really check out Soizu!

Ludah Productions

(Indonesia)

<http://www.myspace.com/ludahproduction>

Black and death metal label from Indonesia.

Hellhouse 666

(Thailand)

<http://www.hellhouse666.cjb.net/>

Sick label from Thailand with a lot of underground shit. A lot of tapes! Black Metal and such ...

Peppermill Records

(Canada)

<http://www.peppermillrecords.com/>

An experimental label from Canada. Several really cool releases but 30 days is just excellent!

DNA Collective

(Italy)

<http://dnanetlabel.altervista.org/>

Handmade releases!!! and some really cool downloads on their site. Ambient, noise, experimental and also a bit black metal. Interview in the 11th edition of this magazine.

Forbidden Music

(Italy)

forbiddenmusic@hotmail.it

Underground label from Italy with some strange releases from small scenes. No homepage.

Count Beetle

(USA)

<http://www.myspace.com/countbeetle>

Strange music ...

Free Metal Albums

<http://www.freemetalalbums.com/>

Nomen est omen.

Free Albums

<http://freealbums.blogsome.com/>

Free albums from a wide wide range of genres. Also with description

Free Music Archive

<http://freemusicarchive.org/>

A lot of free music ... still in beta version.

Demo Archives

<http://www.demoarchives.com/>

If you are interested in rare metal demos, this is the place to do some research.

Vital Weekly

<http://www.vitalweekly.net/>

Mandatory newsletter if you are interested in experimental stuff.

Index pictures:

<http://www.archive.org/details/modernillustrati00penn>

<http://www.archive.org/details/artofillustratio00blacrich>

<http://www.archive.org/details/handbookofillust00hint>

<http://www.archive.org/details/englishillustrat00whit>

Outlook

More of the same I would say

Interview

Reviews

Less metal and more other stuff ...

I am thinking about writing on a strange DVD

Poetry? Maybe.

And those odd old pictures.

